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***“Hand this Man over to Satan”:  
Curse, Exclusion, and Salvation in 1 Corinthians 5***

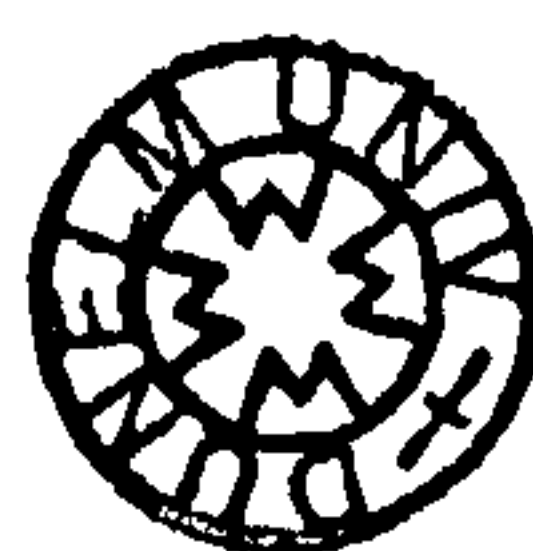
**By David Raymond Smith**

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**Submitted in fulfilment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**University of Durham  
Department of Theology and Religion**

**2005**



**15 MAR 2006**

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## Declaration

I declare that this thesis embodies the results of my own work, that it has been composed by myself, and that it does not include work that has been presented for a degree in this, or any other, university.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. R. Smith", with a stylized flourish at the end.



## Abstract

From Tertullian’s curse interpretation, to modern non-curse readings, Paul’s enigmatic words in 1 Corinthians 5:5 have long exercised scholars. The aim of this thesis is to examine Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 5, and in particular the phrase *paradounai ton toiouton tō satana* in verse 5, which we will maintain is most persuasively understood within the context of ancient cursing. In particular, this thesis will undertake a long overdue reconsideration and reformulation of the curse interpretation, in order to rebut its critics, bolster its argumentation, and re-establish it as the most compelling reading of 1 Corinthians 5:5.

To this end, a critical history of interpretation of verse 5 is conducted, which highlights the current weakness of both curse, and non-curse, interpretations alike. The results of this survey provoke us to conduct a thorough reexamination, and considerable expansion, of the range of source material upon which a reformulated curse reading could be founded. Following this analysis, we undertake an exegesis of 1 Corinthians 5 in which we employ the conclusions drawn from our consideration of ancient cursing.

The results of this study show that *paradounai ton toiouton tō satana eis olethron tēs sarkos* is best understood within the context of an ancient common language of cursing, in which individuals are “handed over” to a malevolent power to suffer harm. In this instance, Paul envisages an exclusion curse. The errant man is ejected from the Corinthian church, and Paul anticipates that his physical suffering and death will ensue. This disciplinary measure prevents him from sinning further. Despite suffering a curse, the man will be saved at the End.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the *Students Awards Agency for Scotland* and the *Arts Humanities Research Council* for their generous financial support, which enabled me to undertake this thesis. I cannot fail to mention Professor John M. G. Barclay, without whose valued friendship and tireless supervision this project would have remained incomplete. I am grateful to the staff and management of Cornerstone Bookshop (Edinburgh) for their encouragement and conviviality; to friends and family, whose support in numerous ways has encouraged me along the road to completion; and finally, to Dr Paul Middleton for his constant humour and companionship.

## Introduction

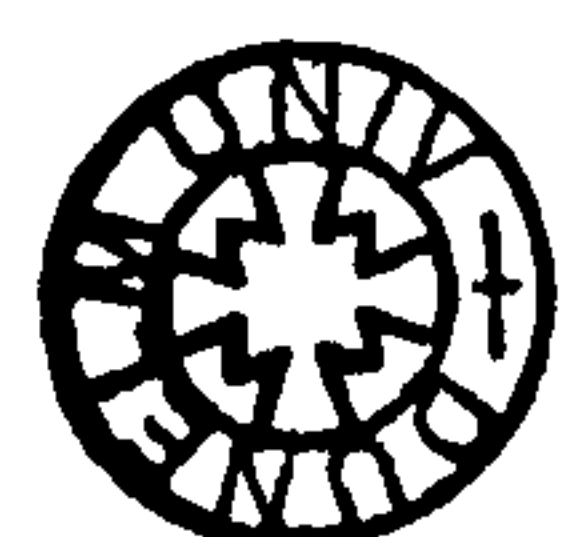
Greek monks have agreed to lift a 100-year-old curse on a village whose people triggered a massacre by soldiers of the Ottoman empire. The curse condemns the people of Moudros, on the island of Limnos, to “never sleep again”, because their actions led to the death of almost all monks on the island. The curse has been chanted by the monks of the Mount Athos community on 23 August every year—but this year a delegation from the Koutloumoussi monastery will travel to Moudros to formally lift it. “This will be a relief for many people here, who did not want the curse still hanging over their heads,” said the mayor of the village, Kostas Adamidis.<sup>1</sup>

A study of “cursing” in the ancient world reveals a less romantic, more disturbing, facet to ancient life. Far from the realm of ancient philosophy, art, and architecture, everyday people were employing “curses” and “binding spells” to aid them in many aspects of their daily life. Like those who focus only upon the “high” cultural achievements of this age, many today ignore—or even dismiss—the role of more disturbing phenomena, such as “cursing” in early Christianity. Instead, a portrait of the early church is painted which is either akin to the idealisations contained in Acts, or which is indistinguishable from contemporary ecclesiastical forms. In this study, we will focus upon a very specific, alleged, instance of cursing in the Pauline corpus in 1 Corinthians 5:5, which has caused centuries of debate.

In part one, we will conduct a critical survey of nearly two millennia of interpretation of Paul’s words in verse 5. In particular, we shall explore the basis upon which some claim that 1 Corinthians 5:5 constitutes a “curse” (cf. part 1.1). Furthermore, we will assess the arguments of a growing number of scholars who reject such a reading of παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός in favour of an interpretation that envisages exclusion alone (cf. part 1.2).

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<sup>1</sup> BBC News, “Monks Lift Curse on Aegean Villagers”,  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/1454197.stm> (Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2001).





However, unlike the readings of many contemporary scholars, we will demonstrate that the “curse” interpretation, although currently flawed, has the greater merit in explaining verse 5. Several reasons underpin this assessment: firstly, as we will see in part two, a considerable amount of pertinent epigraphic material has been discovered since the time of Deissmann (in particular, cf. part 2.2.2). As such, it is rash to dismiss the “curse” interpretation without first considering this evidence. Secondly, a shift away from a philological understanding of language as containing a stable, intrinsic, meaning—towards a more contextual interpretation of words, directs our thoughts away from the presence of “parallel” terminology (which is the fixation of many older “curse” interpretations), towards the similar function of a range of words in a given context. This enables us to explore other, alleged, “curse” terminology outwith παραδίδωμι.

Finally, as we will contend in part one, the non-“curse” readings we will consider are fatally undermined by political and ecclesiastical concerns. Thus, they are open to the charge of being anachronistic. Moreover, we will argue that due to an (often implicit) hermeneutic in which the primacy of the early church for contemporary practice is maintained, it is difficult (if not impossible) for most proponents of a non-“curse” interpretation to conclude that Paul envisages a “curse”—for they would be compelled to adopt this understanding in their contemporary ecclesiastical outlook (which, it is likely, many would find unpalatable).

Without conducting a full exploration of ancient “curse” material, it is not possible to properly assess the “curse” interpretation (no critic of a “curse” reading that we will consider, including South, has conducted such a study). Therefore, we will undertake a broad examination of Jewish and Graeco-Roman cursing in part two. In particular, our study will be explore Tanakh (in part 2.1), “Curse Tablets” and “Binding Spells” (in



part 2.2), Cursing in the Dead Sea Scrolls (in part 2.3), Cursing in the Greek Magical Papyri (in part 2.4), and finally Cursing in *Sepher ha-Razim* (in part 2.5).

This study, which employs some of the most recent “curse” material, raises some interesting avenues for bolstering, and reformulating, the traditional “curse” interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5:5. In particular, we will demonstrate that a cross-cultural language of “cursing” exists, and furthermore that an understanding of “cursing” was attested throughout Paul’s cultural milieu.

In part three, we will apply the results of our study in part two to Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 5. Unlike many who have previously considered this passage, we will contextualise Paul’s thought within a discussion of cursing from the outset, in verse 1. As such, we will avoid the eclectic approach of some former “curse” readings (which focus primarily upon verse 5).

Moreover, we will seek resonances between Paul’s thought and ancient “curse” traditions. Words spark associations, which are interrelated (but not necessarily identical in detail). As such, although mainly clustered around an ancient conception of cursing, we will argue that Paul’s words παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ resonate widely. In particular, Paul’s thinking flows from the association of the man’s sexual immorality with his γυνὴ πατρός (in verse 1), to the context of cursing (as the appropriate punishment for this infraction). With the exclusion “curses” of Deuteronomy resonating strongly in Paul’s mind, coupled with the lethal Levitical penalty of כרת, Paul’s thought throughout chapter 5 follows the dual motifs of “curse” and exclusion. These themes echo widely with broader conceptions of cursing and exclusion in Paul’s thinking.

Ultimately, we will suggest that Paul commands the Corinthians to exclude the errant man from the church in Corinth. Following his expulsion, Paul anticipates that physical suffering and death will ensue. Despite experiencing death as the result of this "curse", the man will yet be saved at the End.



## Part one: 1 Corinthians 5:5: A Critical Reception History

[O]ne method seems to me worth mentioning. It is a variant of the (at present unfashionable) historical method. It consists, simply, in trying to find out what other people have thought and said about the problem in hand: why they have to face it; how they formulated it; how they tried to solve it. This seems to me important because it is part of the general method of rational discussion. If we ignore what other people are thinking, or have thought in the past, then rational discussion must come to an end, though each of us may go on happily talking to themselves.<sup>1</sup>

Recent studies of Pauline cursing have focussed upon Paul's letter to the Galatians. This is unsurprising, for as Morland notes (in his 1995 work, *The Rhetoric of Curse in Galatians*) "more than half of Paul's curse terms [are] in Galatians."<sup>2</sup> Whilst this thesis will consider Pauline curse language in Galatians,<sup>3</sup> we shall not seek to reduplicate recent work by making it the focus of our study. Instead, we will give especial attention to the enigmatic words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 5.<sup>4</sup> In particular, we will focus upon the initial part of verse 5 (παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ)<sup>5</sup> due to its identification by some exegetes as an act of Pauline cursing or malevolent magic.<sup>6</sup>

Some may, quite reasonably, question the appropriateness of isolating this clause from the wider context of verse 5 (i.e., εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός, ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῇ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου). However, two arguments can be offered by way of

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<sup>1</sup> K. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), 17.

<sup>2</sup> K. A. Morland, *The Rhetoric of Curse in Galatians: Paul Confronts Another Gospel* (Emory Studies in Early Christianity; Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1995), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Specifically, we will consider Paul's use of ἀνάθεμα in part 3.4.2.3.

<sup>4</sup> Morland devotes only one and a half pages to a discussion of cursing in 1 Corinthians 5 (*Rhetoric*, 162-163). Even though his work is clearly defined as a study of Galatians, his brevity in this instance is unfortunate, for Morland fails to justify his contentious assertion that 1 Corinthians 5 constitutes a "curse ceremony". Instead of carefully arguing for *his* curse interpretation, Morland merely lists a number of familiar exegetes (many of whom we will consider in part 1.1) who have argued for a curse reading of verse 5 (Brun, Conzelmann, Forkman, Lang, Lietzmann, Wiefel, Wiles). Of more concern is Morland's failure to note any alternative—non-curse—readings of verse 5.

<sup>5</sup> Part one is not an exhaustive history of interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5:5: such a feat is not practical given the confines of space, nor necessary to highlight the various weaknesses in each argument. Rather, we will survey a range of what are considered to be the most "significant" understandings of verse 5, whilst noting other readings as a part of this discussion ("significance" is judged in terms of the longevity of a certain scholar's argument, and the presence of a certain argument in a number of scholarly sources).

<sup>6</sup> Throughout this survey in part one, the use of the terms "curse" and "magic" reflect their presence in a given scholar's reading of 1 Corinthians 5.



justification for this approach: firstly, the majority of readings that involve the concepts of cursing and magic are focussed (sometimes narrowly) upon the phrase παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ. Secondly, in this part we are not concerned with redressing any perceived imbalance in the scholarly treatments of verse 5, but with critically surveying how this passage has been read in terms of cursing and magic.<sup>7</sup> Notwithstanding, if a particular scholar interprets the extended phrase παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός in terms of cursing and/or magic, we will accordingly consider this broader context.

Many others throughout the centuries have discussed 1 Corinthians 5:5. Unsurprisingly, some of our conclusions will chime with the thoughts of those exegetes who have already explored the verse: principally, the determination that Paul's words are to be interpreted as a Pauline injunction to 'curse' the errant Corinthian. In this light, one might wonder if there is a need for the present study. We will address this concern throughout our discussion in this part, by demonstrating the necessity for a contemporary re-interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5:5, which navigates and circumvents the difficulties of previous readings—both curse, and non-curse readings alike.

Through a broad, and critical, survey of the varying interpretations of verse 5, we will see that whilst many scholars have advocated readings of the verse that employ the language of 'curse' or 'magic', they have failed to justify convincingly their interpretation. In fact, in some instances, assertion has replaced argument amid an atmosphere of scholarly consensus.

In particular, we will argue that a variety of factors have contributed to the weakness, and ultimately, the failure of various curse interpretations:<sup>8</sup> the unacknowledged and

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<sup>7</sup> Our wider exegesis of 1 Corinthians 5, in part three, will consider not only verse 5—in its entirety—but also the wider context in which these words appear.

<sup>8</sup> The waning popularity of a curse interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5:5 can be seen when one compares Craig's 1981 reading (in the *Interpreter's Bible*) in which παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ is understood as a curse that "can only mean death" (C. T. Craig, "The First Epistle to the Corinthians" in *The Interpreter's Bible: The Holy Scriptures in the King James and Revised Standard Versions with General Articles and Introduction, Exegesis, Exposition for Each Book of the Bible* [vol.



unexplained use of equivocal terminology (such as ‘curse’, ‘magic’, ‘parallel’, ‘influence’); the lack of a critical methodology when drawing ‘parallels’ between the ‘hand over’ phrase and extra-Pauline Graeco-Roman curse material (for example, the use of the second to fourth century *Greek Magical Papyri*—frequently without explanation); and the construction of an interpretation on the basis of one phrase (i.e., παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ, or παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός) within one verse (i.e. 1 Corinthians 5:5), without anchoring it within its wider context. Having exposed these weaknesses, we will address each of them in our exegesis of 1 Corinthians 5 (in part three) in our endeavour to formulate a more persuasive curse reading.

The weakness of various readings of 1 Corinthians 5:5 that employ the language of ‘curse’ and/or ‘magic’ has recently been seized upon by some scholars, who have sought to advocate alternative non-curse and non-magical readings of this passage.<sup>9</sup> Such interpretations understand Paul’s words solely in terms of ‘expulsion’ or ‘excommunication’.<sup>10</sup> These readings have been refined through sociological<sup>11</sup> and

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10, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981], 63) with Sampley’s treatment of 1 Corinthians 5:5 in the *New Interpreter’s Bible* (J. P. Sampley, “The First Letter to the Corinthians”, *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 10, 771-1003). Sampley’s interpretation is unelaborated. Unlike Craig, he makes no mention of curse, and fails to interact with Craig’s curse reading in the previous edition of *Interpreter’s Bible*.

<sup>9</sup> See the discussion of non-curse readings of 1 Corinthians 5:5 in part 1.2. It should be noted that although a recent growing consensus amongst scholars favours non-curse, and non-magical, readings of verse 5, such interpretations have existed since Patristic times (see part 1.2).

<sup>10</sup> Scholars vary in their description of the act of removing an offender from church fellowship in the first-century. Some scholars favour the descriptive, non-ecclesiastical, term “expulsion”, rightly rejecting others’ use of the term “excommunication” as being anachronistic. We will employ the descriptive term “expulsion”, unless alternative terminology is employed by a given scholar.

<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that a sociological interpretation of verse 5 in no way negates an historical reading. For example, Harris’ reading of 1 Corinthians 5 (G. Harris, “The Beginnings of Church Discipline: 1 Corinthians 5”, *New Testament Studies* 37 [1991] 1-21) combines an historical close reading of the biblical text with a sociological analysis (in particular, Harris employs Berger’s Legitimation Theory), producing a reading that affirms *both* ‘expulsion’ (elsewhere Harris speaks of “excommunication” [Harris, “Beginnings”, 19]) and “curse” in verse 5: “The ‘delivery to Satan’ (v. 5) was a curse or ban which would reverse the effects of baptism and expel the man from the community. The penalty was not limited to a spiritual or psychological realm only, apart from material and social consequences. The sanction against the man was quite sharp, resulting in his total exclusion from the church and his anticipated death.” (Harris, “Beginnings”, 16, 19).

Unlike Harris’ work, our analysis will not employ sociological methodology, for we are not concerned with the social function of either expulsion or cursing (a valid area of study in which much fruitful work has already been conducted in modern times). Rather, we are concerned to provide an historical reading of the Pauline texts we will consider. Sociological analysis is a secondary analysis once the meaning(s) of the text have been established. South makes a similar distinction (J. T. South, *Disciplinary Practices in Pauline Texts* [Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992], 5).



anthropological<sup>12</sup> explorations of the Corinthian community.

Whilst some non-curse interpretations argue for exclusion or excommunication alone, other readings envisage consequences for the errant Corinthian commensurate with curse readings (such as physical [see part 1.2.1] or psychological suffering [see part 1.2.2])—whilst also affirming exclusion or excommunication. However, their treatment of verse 5 is not expressed with reference to the language of ‘cursing’, and cursing and magic are often explicitly rejected (hence, their categorisation in part 1.2).

Through our critical survey, we will see that whilst various curse interpretations are unpersuasive, many non-curse and non-magic readings of verse 5 are similarly unconvincing. They prematurely dismiss curse interpretations before they have considered if they can modify or improve upon their formulation (for example, one need not argue that death alone follows from the act of cursing in verse 5). Furthermore, many non-curse interpretations appear to be motivated by a theological and hermeneutical undercurrent that is concerned with contemporary application.<sup>13</sup> Whilst, in principle, this is not problematic,<sup>14</sup> it is fruitful to reflect if such an approach precludes the majority of exegetes from interpreting verse 5 in terms of curse and death.<sup>15</sup>

With a notable exception, four principal readings<sup>16</sup> of παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. C. J. Roetzel, *Paul—A Jew on the Margins* (Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 26-27.

<sup>13</sup> It would be foolish to be overly dogmatic in this instance, for motivation can be hard to demonstrate. However, we can expose an exegete’s presuppositions from the textual clues in their work (South [whom we consider in part 1.2.3.3] is a good example of a scholar whose presuppositions are conspicuous).

<sup>14</sup> In fact, in an ecclesiastical context, this approach will be rightly favoured.

<sup>15</sup> Of course, it is possible to translate the bible into a contemporary context without being committed to replicating what one considers to be the authorial meaning of the text (cf. our discussion of Havener in part 1.1).

<sup>16</sup> J. Klausner’s (*From Jesus to Paul* [trans. W. F. Stinespring, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1946]) interpretation of verse 5 proves an interesting exception to our four-fold classification. Rather than a curse or an act of exclusion or excommunication, Klausner argues that in 1 Corinthians 5:5 Paul was calling for the application of the death penalty, or “death sentence” (Klausner, *Jesus*, 553). We will consider Havener’s interpretation (in part 1.1.7) which combines a curse reading with capital punishment.

More broadly, in thirteenth century Europe, the interpretation of verse 5, and in particular the



Σατανᾶ, or the extended παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾶ εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός, have emerged after nearly two millennia of reflection upon this elusive Pauline instruction, which we will consider through the use of the following heuristic categories:<sup>17</sup> curse and/or magical interpretations (in part 1.1); non-curse and/or non-magical interpretations (in part 1.2) that envision physical (in part 1.2.1), or psychological (in part 1.2.2), suffering and exclusion; and exclusion-only interpretations (in part 1.2.3), in which neither the language of curse or magic, nor physical nor psychological suffering feature. These different readings provide us with a helpful four-fold structure within which to conduct our critical survey of interpretations of παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾶ in 1 Corinthians 5:5.

### **1.1 Curse and Magic Interpretations of παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾶ**

Throughout part 1.1, we will consider, in chronological order, various readings of παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾶ that employ the language of cursing. From the ancient Carthaginian theologian Tertullian to the modern-day scholar A. Yarbro Collins, 1 Corinthians 5:5 is understood in terms of cursing and magic.<sup>18</sup> Exclusion may also feature in the interpretation of verse 5 in concert with a curse or magic interpretation<sup>19</sup> (although some interpreters are too opaque concerning the role of exclusion in this passage, rendering it impossible to conclude either way).<sup>20</sup> It is important to note that

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phrase εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός, was associated with the human violence of the Inquisition, which tortured and murdered in order to ensure the “salvation” of the “spirit” (ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῇ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου). See E. Peters, “Destruction of the Flesh – Salvation of the Spirit: The Paradoxes of Torture in Medieval Christian Society” in A. Ferreiro (ed.), *The Devil, Heresy and Witchcraft in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honor of Jeffrey B. Russell* (Cultures, Beliefs and Traditions: Medieval and Early Modern Peoples 6, Leiden: Brill, 1998), 131-148 at 147.

These are heuristic categories that are considered the most useful to aid a critical survey of 1 Corinthians 5:5 in relation to cursing and magical readings. A variety of other potential schemata exist.

<sup>17</sup> Note, the infinitive παραδοῦναι here functions as an imperative.

<sup>18</sup> In spite of this shared terminology, we should not suppose that scholars share an identical conception of cursing or magic. Even so, there are sufficient similarities between various descriptions of cursing for the generic category ‘curse interpretation’ to remain valuable.

<sup>19</sup> Consider Harris (“Beginnings”, 16) who argues that “The ‘delivery to Satan’ (v. 5) was a curse or ban which would reverse the effects of baptism and expel the man from the community.”

<sup>20</sup> It is worth stressing that the issue with which we are presently concerned is not if exclusion is envisaged in the wider words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 5, but if it is imagined in the phrase παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾶ. As we will argue in part three, there is good reason to conclude that exclusion is envisaged in the wider context of 1 Corinthians 5 (for example, consider verses 2, 7, 11, and



even if exclusion is envisaged in verse 5, the curse and magic interpretations which we will consider in part 1.1. still radically differ from those exclusion-only readings to be examined in part 1.2.3: for unlike the former, the latter explicitly deny the involvement of the concept of curse or magic in Paul's "hand over" phrase.

### 1.1.1 Tertullian (c. 160-225)

Tertullian's discussion of 1 Corinthians 5:5 forms part of a wider discussion of the role of penance (or more specifically *exomologesis*<sup>21</sup>) in the church at the turn of the third century (C. E.).<sup>22</sup> Whereas in his previous treatise, *De Paenitentia*, Tertullian accorded the church the ability to absolve grave sins committed after baptism—for which the ecclesiastical practice of *exomologesis* was carried out—in *De Pudicitia*, Tertullian (now writing as a Montanist) denies the possibility of absolution through *exomologesis* for certain grievous sins "graver and deadly, which cannot be pardoned":<sup>23</sup>

murder, idolatry, injustice, apostasy, blasphemy; yes, and also adultery and fornication and any other violation of the temple of God.<sup>24</sup>

These sins are now considered "irremissible":<sup>25</sup> forgiveness is by God alone, and cannot be accorded by the Church. As such, Tertullian argues systematically that his contemporary Church is mistaken in its lax extension of *exomologesis* to cases of post-baptismal immorality of an "irremissible" nature.<sup>26</sup>

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13, which may all be read in terms of a call to exclusion), but not in the phrase παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ itself.

<sup>21</sup> Tertullian discusses *exomologesis*, this most serious form of protracted penitence, in *De Paenitentia*.

<sup>22</sup> For a detailed discussion of 1 Corinthians 5:3-5 from 200 C. E. to 451 C. E., see B. A. McDonald, "Spirit, Penance, and Perfection: The Exegesis of I Corinthians 5:3-5 from A.D. 200-451" (PhD Dissertation: University of Edinburgh, 1993).

<sup>23</sup> *De Pudicitia* 19:25 (trans. W. P. Le Saint, *Tertullian: Treatises on Penitence: On Penitence and On Purity* [Ancient Christian Writers; The Works of the Fathers in Translation 28; Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press and London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1959], 114).

<sup>24</sup> *De Pudicitia* 19:25 (Le Saint, *Tertullian*, 114).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *De Pudicitia*, 2.

<sup>26</sup> Tertullian's *De Pudicitia* cites with consternation an ecclesiastical edict which pronounced the forgiveness of 'adultery' and 'fornication' following the performance of penance: "The Pontifex Maximus, forsooth—I mean the 'bishop of bishops!'—issues this pronouncement: *I forgive sins of adultery and fornication to those who have performed penance.*" (*De Pudicitia*, 1:6).



Tertullian's argument is seasoned with a range of biblical citations and illusions. Of particular interest is his disagreement over the interpretation of apostolic forgiveness in 2 Corinthians 2, which frames Tertullian's extended discussion of the sexually immoral Corinthian of 1 Corinthians 5.<sup>27</sup> Tertullian's opponents argue that the same incestuous individual is in mind in both 1 Corinthians 5 and 2 Corinthians 2. This interpretative move introduces the possibility of forgiveness and restoration:

they [Tertullian's opponents] actually suppose that the Apostle Paul, in *Second Corinthians*, granted pardon to the self-same fornicator—that wicked heir of his father's marriage—whom in *First Corinthians* he decreed was to be *given over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh*.<sup>28</sup>

For Tertullian, it is inconceivable that the apostle Paul would have “pardoned so casually the abandoned licentiousness of a fornication aggravated by incest, without demanding from the guilty man at least those legally established forms of penance.”<sup>29</sup> Instead, Tertullian maintains that 1 Corinthians 5 and 2 Corinthians 2 refer to two different individuals.<sup>30</sup>

However, for Tertullian's detractors,<sup>31</sup> public penance followed by forgiveness—and not destruction—is envisaged in 1 Corinthians 5. In particular, they interpret εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός in terms of a process of penance.<sup>32</sup> In stark contrast, for

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<sup>27</sup> Tertullian (in *De Pudicitia*, 2:9) makes a passing reference to 1 Corinthians 5:5 as part of a wider argument in which he disputes with those who elevate forgiveness above judgment and discipline (*De Pudicitia*, 2.1-2).

<sup>28</sup> Tertullian, along with the majority of exegetes (ancient and modern), claims incest to be the errant Corinthian's sin. We will consider the arguments in favour of identifying ὥστε γυναῖκά τινά τοῦ πατρὸς ἔχειν (1 Corinthians 5:1) with incest in part three (*De Pudicitia*, 13:1 [Le Saint, *Tertullian*, 85-86. Emphasis added]).

<sup>29</sup> *De Pudicitia*, 13:9 (Le Saint, *Tertullian*, 87).

<sup>30</sup> Tertullian's argument is at variance with numerous Fathers: Origen; Gregory Nazianzen; Isidore of Pelusium; Pacian; Ambrose; Augustine; Gregory the Great. Given the political dimension of this discussion (i.e., the Church's opposition to Montanism), Tertullian's isolation is unsurprising. Nearly two millennia later, the modern consensus of scholars is that 1 Corinthians 5 and 2 Corinthians 2 refer to two different individuals.

<sup>31</sup> The position of his detractors being recounted by Tertullian.

<sup>32</sup> As Tertullian states: “they go so far as to interpret *destruction of the flesh* [*carnis interitum*] as referring to the ritual of penance which may seem to satisfy God by mortification of the flesh, through fasts, filth, every sort of neglect and deliberate harsh treatment” (*De Pudicitia*, 13:14 [Le Saint, *Tertullian*, 87-88]).



Tertullian, the Pauline command: παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός (*dedendum eiusmodi Satanae in interitum carnis*) is associated not with penance, but with curse and physical death—enacted via divine agency.<sup>33</sup>

For whom should they mourn? For one who was dead, of course. Before whom should they mourn? Before the Lord, of course, so that in some way or other *he should be taken from amongst them* [*aufero de medio eorum*]. Evidently this does not mean that he should be excommunicated—for something within the competence of the presiding officer would not be asked of God—but rather that he should be *more completely taken away from the Church by that death*, also, which is common to all and especially proper to that same flesh which was already a rotting corpse, corrupt with a decay which is irremediable. And, therefore, in so far as it was possible for him to be *taken away* betimes, the Apostle decreed that *such a one should be handed over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh* [*dedendum eiusmodi Satanae in interitum carnis*]. *For a curse* [*maledici*] *followed flesh which was given over to Satan*, so that it might be deprived of the sacrament of the Blessing, never again to return to the camp of the Church. We see, therefore, that in this passage the Apostle's severity touches two men, one of whom is *puffed up* and the other *incestuous*. It is armed with a rod in the one case, with a judicial sentence in the other; a rod with which he threatened, a judicial sentence which he executed; the former he continues to flourish, the latter he fulminates at once; with the one he *rebuked* and with the other he *condemned*. We may be sure, then, that thereafter the man who was rebuked trembled under the threat of the rod, *the man who was condemned perished in the infliction of punishment*. The former perseveres because he fears a blow, *the latter disappears from amongst them, because he suffers a penalty*.<sup>34</sup>

Tertullian's words are dense, and require careful unpacking. On the basis of 1 Corinthians 5:2, he interprets the removal of the man (*aufero de medio eorum*) in terms of death, and not excommunication. Tertullian reasons that as God is called upon to act, excommunication cannot be envisaged by Paul, for such an action was within the power of the office of the president (*praesidentis officio*).<sup>35</sup>

Instead, Tertullian restates his expectation that the errant Corinthian suffered a premature death, associating the act of handing over to Satan with death (i.e., "the man who was condemned perished in the infliction of punishment").<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Allo, who mistakenly attributes the interpretation of verse 5 in terms of death to Protestant exegesis since the time of Bengel: "[such an interpretation is] une fantaisie l'exégèse d'auteurs protestants qui, depuis Bengel jusqu'à Godet, Schmidt, (Renan id.), von Dobschütz, Lietzmann, Everling, J. Weiss, tiennent que εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός...équivalait à une sentence de mort" (E. B. Allo, *Saint Paul: Première Épitre aux Corinthiens* [2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Paris: J. Gabalda, 1956], 123).

<sup>34</sup> *De Pudicitia*, 14:16-17 (Le Saint, *Tertullian*, 92-93). Emphasis added.

<sup>35</sup> *De Pudicitia*, 14:16 (Le Saint, 252 n. 393). In a discussion of Tertullian's use of the term *officium*, Rankin interprets this phrase as denoting "the official province of the church president" (D. Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995], 141. See Rankin, *Tertullian*, 119-174 for a fuller discussion of this term).

<sup>36</sup> Elsewhere, in his treatment of Hymenaeus and Alexander (cf. 1 Timothy 1:20), Tertullian



Elsewhere, drawing upon 1 Corinthians 3:16 as his intertext,<sup>37</sup> Tertullian argues that the “complete destruction”—or death—that follows the defilement of the human “temple of God” is to be equated with *dedendum eiusmodi Satanae in interitum carnis* in verse 5: “Tell me, now, who could ever restore someone whom God completely destroyed, that is to say, someone who has been *handed over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh*.”<sup>38</sup>

The concept of curse is closely linked to the destruction of the errant Corinthian through premature death.<sup>39</sup> “Flesh” delivered to Satan is accursed, depriving it of the “sacrament of the Blessing”,<sup>40</sup> and ensuring the errant Corinthian is permanently debarred from the Church. Tertullian does not elaborate upon the nature of the “curse”. However, elsewhere he describes the errant Corinthian as “damned even to possession by Satan”, “lost to the Church”, and “rejected by her [the Church] with a curse.”<sup>41</sup>

Tertullian’s reading of 1 Corinthians 5:5 is clear in the following respect: the incestuous man is to be cursed and suffer death as the consequence of his sinful action—that is, he is to be “handed over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh”.

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interprets Paul’s phrase παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ in terms of excommunication: “Even though he said, *I handed them over to Satan so that they might receive the discipline of not blaspheming*, yet he meant this for others who had to be taught from the example of these who were *given over to Satan*—and this means ‘excommunicated’ [*extra ecclesiam proiectis*]—that blasphemy must not be committed” (*De Pudicitia*, 13:21). Hymenaeus and Alexander are ‘excommunicated’ without the possibility of return to the church, for their irremissible sin of blasphemy (*De Pudicitia*, 13:19). See also, *De Pudicitia*, 20:12 for other allusions to the use of παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ to denote excommunication.

<sup>37</sup> V. K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* [London: Routledge, 1996], 44-143.

<sup>38</sup> *De Pudicitia*, 16:3.

<sup>39</sup> Thus, later interpreters refer to Tertullian’s reading of 1 Corinthians 5:5 as the “curse/death” interpretation.

<sup>40</sup> *De Pudicitia*, 14:17. Le Saint argues convincingly that, for Tertullian, the lost ‘Blessing’ is baptism (Le Saint, *Tertullian*, 253 n. 397). Cf. *De Pudicitia* 13:23 in which Tertullian speaks of the ‘loss of baptism.’

<sup>41</sup> *De Pudicitia*, 14:24. Cf. “When his final sentence closes with a curse like this [*Tali clausula maledicto detexta*]: *If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus, let him be anathema, maranatha*, then certainly he castigated a definite individual” (*De Pudicitia*, 14:13).

In the light of a modern historical-critical methodology, Tertullian's curse reading is unconvincing.<sup>42</sup> Crucially, his interpretation falters due to his anachronistic reading of Paul's first century letter, *1 Corinthians*, through the specific lens of a second century discussion about penitence.<sup>43</sup> More broadly, Tertullian erroneously interprets Paul's words in the light of his contemporary ecclesiastical structure, as is clear in his reading of verse 5 in terms of death, due to the lack of involvement of the *praesidentis officium*.

### 1.1.2 E. Von Dobschütz, *Christian Life in the Primitive Church* (1904)<sup>44</sup>

Approximately 1700 years after Tertullian, Dobschütz argues that the errant Corinthian man in 1 Corinthians 5 is guilty of committing incest, having married his step-mother.<sup>45</sup> In response to this situation, Paul commands the expulsion of the Corinthian offender whose exclusion is to be accompanied by a curse:

When he became aware of the facts the Apostle demanded a kind of Divine Judgment. He is not content with mere expulsion from the Church, but requires the Church—in spiritual communion with himself in solemn assembly in the name and in the power of Jesus Christ, *to pronounce the curse over the sinner concerned*. The Apostle expects as the effect of this *the sudden death of the guilty person*.<sup>46</sup>

There are clear resonances between Dobschütz's and Tertullian's readings of verse 5. Both interpret this passage in terms of cursing, and both maintain that death is the anticipated outcome of Paul's command (although, whereas Tertullian understands the

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<sup>42</sup> One could argue that it is anachronistic to interpret Tertullian's writings in the light of the modern historical-critical method. However, insofar as Tertullian is presenting his argument as an accurate representation of the Apostle's thought, a modern historical-critical method is appropriate to assess these claims.

<sup>43</sup> In 2 Corinthians 2, Tertullian allows for the possibility of repentance. However, due to his distinction between remissible and irremissible sins, he is forced to oppose any suggestion that the incestuous man of 1 Corinthians 5 is later forgiven in this passage.

<sup>44</sup> First published in 1902 as *Die urchristlichen Gemeinden* [Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1902].

<sup>45</sup> E. Von Dobschütz, *Christian Life in the Primitive Church* (trans. G. Bremner; W. D. Morrison [ed.]; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons/London: Williams and Norgate, 1904), 44.

<sup>46</sup> Dobschütz, *Christian Life*, 46 (emphasis added).



man will suffer a premature death, Dobschütz claims a “sudden death”).<sup>47</sup> Crucially, Dobschütz and Tertullian differ in their overall assessment of this act. For Tertullian, the curse event signals damnation,<sup>48</sup> whilst for Dobschütz, it offers the “hope of his escape from everlasting perdition”.<sup>49</sup>

Dobschütz elaborates further upon the meaning of “curse” in verse 5 by locating it within the wider context of Jewish and Greek cursing:

[παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός, ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῇ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου] can only be understood through a knowledge of contemporary ideas of the curse and its operation, which were in essence the same among Jews and Greeks. From these ideas the conception of the Apostle is distinguished only by the positive moral element.<sup>50</sup>

Dobschütz’s insistence that in order to understand Paul’s conception of cursing, it is necessary to understand the “contemporary ideas” concerning cursing in the ancient world,<sup>51</sup> is a reflection of the *History of Religions School’s* (*Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*) approach to the New Testament.<sup>52</sup> Early scholarship within the *History of*

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<sup>47</sup> Dobschütz, *Christian Life*, 46.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *De Pudicitia*, 14:16-17.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῇ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου (1 Corinthians 5:5), which we will discuss in part 3.4.5.

<sup>50</sup> Dobschütz, *Christian Life*, 46.

<sup>51</sup> Nearly ninety years later, Keener expresses a similar assumption: “Cultural and historical background can clarify virtually every text in the New Testament...Knowing the ancient culture is critical to understanding the Bible.” (C. S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary* [Downers Grove, Inter Varsity Press, 1993], 9-10). Keener’s appraisal of the cultural background of 1 Corinthians 5:5 mirrors Dobschütz assessment in his reference to the “pagan custom of magical execration by devoting a person to the gods of the underworld or other avenging deities” and “curse tablets used for this purpose” (Keener, *Bible Background*, 462).

<sup>52</sup> The influence of the *History of Religions School* (in various forms) pervades other curse interpretations of verse 5 (e.g., Deissmann’s reading of 1 Corinthians 5:5 which we will consider after Dobschütz). Whilst the approach of the *History of Religions School* to biblical interpretation has been largely rejected by modern exegetes in favour of literary and theological readings, Hurtado suggests the existence of a new *History of Religions School*. Writing in relation to the investigation of “early devotion to Jesus”, he understands the new *History of Religions School*,

in a much looser sense of the term, in this case connoting a group of contemporaries with a shared interest in historical investigation of early devotion to Jesus in the context of the Roman-era religious environment, and a shared conviction that the Jewish religious matrix of the Christian movement is more crucial than was recognized in the older

*Religions School* attempted to “understand the writings and theology of the New Testament against the background of different theologies”;<sup>53</sup> whereas later scholarship would try to “see how Christianity developed as a religious community that had to find its way in the world of popular first-century religious belief and practice.”<sup>54</sup>

The examination of newly discovered texts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century fuelled this endeavour (and more broadly the “study of the ancient world”) by providing the necessary evidence to assess “popular first-century religious belief and practice.”<sup>55</sup> Underpinning this approach to Biblical interpretation was a historical methodology in which “Historians have to explain their texts ‘out of’ the ideas of the time.” As Riches explains:

This might be referred to as a ‘genetic’ mode of explanation. If we are to understand an idea, we have to know its family tree, where it comes from. We have, that is to say, to give a causal explanation in which...ideas are presented as the effects of certain antecedent ideas that were prevalent in...[that] culture.<sup>56</sup>

In relation to Pauline cursing, if one were to follow this approach, it would be essential to consider the wider Jewish and Graeco-Roman cultural context of cursing in the first-century (and the genealogy of this concept).<sup>57</sup> Dobschütz treats Jewish and Greek cursing as being, “in essence”, the same phenomenon.<sup>58</sup> As such, he examines both

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*religionsgeschichtliche Schule*” (L. W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ* [Grand Rapids, Michigan and Cambridge, U.K., Wm B. Eerdmans, 2003], 12).

<sup>53</sup> J. K. Riches, *A Century of New Testament Study* [Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 1993], 35.

<sup>54</sup> Riches, *Century*, 35-36.

<sup>55</sup> Riches, *Century*, 36.

<sup>56</sup> Riches, *Century*, 16. Variations on this approach existed. For example, as Riches notes, in relation to Jesus’ ideas, Weiss sought to “locate Jesus’s usage in a range of contemporary options and thereby to discern its characteristic sense” (Riches, *Century*, 16).

<sup>57</sup> Decades after Dobschütz, Craig succinctly expresses an underlying assumption behind this approach: “Paul is the child of his times” (Craig, “First Epistle”, 63).

<sup>58</sup> Dobschütz, *Christian Life*, 46.



ancient Jewish and Greek curse texts in order to understand verse 5. In particular, he focuses upon private curse tablets (or “Tafeln mit privaten Verfluchungen”<sup>59</sup>):<sup>60</sup>

[These tablets] are all to be understood from the presupposition that the divinity [‘Gottheit’]<sup>61</sup> appealed to, in case of the forbidden thing having happened, will immediately intervene, in the same way as it is often accepted that perjury causes sickness (Herodot., iv. 68 f.).<sup>62</sup>

Thus, Dobschütz highlights evidence of a private form of cursing in which a deity is called upon to ‘intervene’ in a tangible manner—the bringing about of a physical ailment.<sup>63</sup> From the arena of ‘public cursing’, he notes: “The curse pronounced on Hippolytus by Theseus (Euripides, *Hipp.*, 88 ff.), where, in case death should not at once occur, exile is added; the curse pronounced on Alcibiades by the Eumolpidae.”<sup>64</sup>

Having outlined some Greek curse material (both private and public), Dobschütz considers some sources of Jewish cursing, as contained in the Old and New Testaments and various ‘apocryphal’ Gospels. His material is organised around the theme of “sudden judgments” of God, which invariably lead to death. As an example, Dobschütz cites the case of Hananiah (Jeremiah 28:16f.) in which she dies “within two months”. Further examples of divine judgment which lead to death are cited: 1 Maccabees 9:54; Acts 5:1;<sup>65</sup> 12:23; 13:11.<sup>66</sup> Dobschütz relates these instances to 1 Corinthians 5 through

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<sup>59</sup> Dobschütz, *Die urchristlichen*, 270.

<sup>60</sup> Dobschütz, *Christian Life*, 389-390. We will discuss “curse tablets” in part 2.2.

<sup>61</sup> Dobschütz, *Die urchristlichen*, 271.

<sup>62</sup> Dobschütz, *Christian Life*, 390.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 5 where Dobschütz conceives of this intervention in terms of death.

<sup>64</sup> Dobschütz, *Christian Life*, 390.

<sup>65</sup> We will conduct our own analysis of the account of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) in part 3.4.4.3.

<sup>66</sup> Dobschütz does make mention of the handing over of Job to Satan. However, he dismisses this material as “heterogeneous” (Dobschütz, *Christian Life*, 390).

the claim that “Sudden death is also indicated in the παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός.”<sup>67</sup>

Despite arguing for an interpretation of verse 5 in terms of curse and death, ultimately Dobschütz utilities 2 Corinthians 2 and the story of Jonah as his intertexts and claims that the errant Corinthian did *not* suffer death, but was instead restored to the Corinthian church:<sup>68</sup>

The majority at least of the Church decided, late enough indeed, but still eventually, to agree to his wishes. The curse was pronounced. It is true the penal miracle did not appear. The curse bound up of necessity with excommunication had, however, manifestly an effect of another kind. The sinner came to see his guilt, and repented...The case of Nineveh in particular in Jonah's history is designed to teach that repentance and turning away from sin may undo the effect of the curse. This was also the view of the Apostle and his time. Hence we have the practical consequence that the withholding of divine judgment amounted to a reinstatement of the sinner by God.<sup>69</sup>

At this juncture, Dobschütz's curse interpretation is at its least convincing. In addition to his failure to explain why Paul would have sought the expulsion of the Corinthian wrongdoer if he anticipated the man's “sudden death”,<sup>70</sup> his reading now empties his understanding of curse of any impact—for the curse did not take effect. As such, in practice, Dobschütz's foresaw exclusion alone in verse 5. One cannot help but wonder if contemporary ecclesiastical concerns (such as in Tertullian's reading) cause Dobschütz to adopt this last minute rejection of the curse.

**1.1.3 G. A. Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten* (1908)  
*Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History*  
(1926 [2<sup>nd</sup> ed.] )**

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<sup>67</sup> Dobschütz, *Christian Life*, 390.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Büchsel whose interpretation resonates strongly with Dobschütz's and Deissmann's (whom we will consider next), although he rightly concludes that “It is mere conjecture that the judgment failed to take effect” (F. Büchsel, “*paradidōmi*”, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 2 [1964], 170).

<sup>69</sup> Dobschütz, *Christian Life*, 48.

<sup>70</sup> Dobschütz, *Christian Life*, 46.



In 1908, Deissmann (1866-1937) published *Licht vom Osten*, in which he sought to examine the New Testament's language, literature, and social and religious history in the context of "Light from the East": that is, discoveries of various ancient epigraphical material. For Deissmann, this ancient material was not merely of historical interest, but was rather a hermeneutical "sunbeam"<sup>71</sup> that would "reanimate the apostles and evangelists...[and would] bring out with greater distinctness the august figure of the Redeemer from the East, Him whom the Church is bound to reverence and to obey."<sup>72</sup>

Deissmann's interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5:5 in the light of ancient epigraphical material is profoundly influential upon subsequent curse readings of παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ. Like Dobschütz,<sup>73</sup> Deissmann interprets this Pauline phrase in the light of ancient cursing:<sup>74</sup>

One of the marks of the highly popular *style of St. Paul's missionary methods* is that in many passages of his letters we find St. Paul *employing a usage particularly familiar and intelligible to popular feeling* [i.e., παραδίδωμι]—I mean the *technical phraseology* and the cadence of the language of magic...in the case of the directions to the Corinthian church concerning the punishment of the transgressor who had committed sin with his step-mother, the full meaning does not come out until the passage is read in connexion with the *ancient custom of execration, i.e. devoting a person to the gods of the lower world*. A regular usage was established in the language of these execrations,—a usage common to antiquity. The only difference between Jewish and pagan execrations probably lay in the fact that Satan took the place of the gods of the lower world. In form, however, there must have been great similarities. This is seen in the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians:— "Gather

<sup>71</sup> Commenting primarily upon Deissmann's work, *Paulus*, but with an eye on his previous work, *Light from the East*, Schweitzer cuttingly states that "[Deissmann] has a high appreciation of local colour and the memorials of ancient civilisation, but when it comes really to explaining the ideas he is not able to draw nearly so much profit from them as he expected" (A. Schweitzer, *Paul and his Interpreters: A Critical History* [trans. W. Montgomery; London: A. & C. Black, 1912], 172 n. 1).

<sup>72</sup> A. Deissmann, Preface to the First Edition, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World* [4<sup>th</sup> ed.; trans. L. R. M. Strachan; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995], xv.

<sup>73</sup> Dobschütz, *Christian Life*, 390.

<sup>74</sup> Given the endurance of Deissmann's argument, and its influence on later exegetes, a fuller quotation has been given. Deissmann has been particularly influential upon German interpreters over the course of several decades (e.g., Weiss [J. Weiss, *Der Erste Korintherbrief* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910), 131] Lietzmann [H. Lietzmann, *An Die Korinther I II* (Tübingen: J. C. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1923), 23], Meyer [W. Meyer, *Der erste Korintherbrief* (1. Teil: Kapitel 1-10; Die Gemeinschaft der Heiligen; Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1947), 374-375], Harder [G. Harder, *Paulus und das Gebet* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1936), 122 n. 1], Doskocil [W. Doskocil, *Der Bann In Der Urkirche: Eine Rechtsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (München: Kommissionsverlag Karl Zink, 1958), 106], Wiefel [W. Wiefel, "Fluch und Sakralrecht", *Numen* 16 (1969), 211-233 at 217 n. 40]).



together in the name of the Lord Jesus, ye and my spirit, and in the fellowship with the power of our Lord Jesus deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." Two expressions are here adopted from the ritual of cursing. The phrase "deliver unto Satan that..." recurring in I Tim. i. 20, corresponds to the formula in the London Magical Papyrus 46<sub>334</sub> ff.:—"Daemon of the dead,...I deliver unto thee (such a man), in order that..." and even the unobtrusive little word σύν, "with," "in fellowship with," is technical in just such contexts as this: we find it not only in the Paris Magical Papyrus, but also on a much older Attic cursing tablet of lead (3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B. C.):—"I will bind her...in fellowship with Hecate, who is below the earth, and the Erinyes." All this proves therefore that the apostle advises the Corinthian church to perform a solemn act of execration.<sup>75</sup>

We will consider the substantive points of Deissmann's argument in order: firstly, he contends that the phrase παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ, is purposefully drawn from the formulaic, repetitive, language of 'magic' as a means of effective, mission-orientated, communication.<sup>76</sup> Thus, Deissmann is open to the charge of objectifying culture—and in particular, Hellenistic culture—in terms of something that Paul could stand aloof from and utilise to his own rhetorical, missiological, ends:

Paul and the other apostles are, in a much higher degree than has probably been supposed, at home also in the world of cultural, especially of religious, ethical, and legal ideas peculiar to their Hellenistic age, and they are fond of making frequent use of details taken from this world of thought.<sup>77</sup>

Secondly, like Dobschütz, Deissmann's approach to Biblical interpretation is reflective of the *History of Religions School*.<sup>78</sup> This is especially evident in his claim that the "full

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<sup>75</sup> Deissmann, *Light*, 301-303 (emphasis added). Deissmann offers a more succinct interpretation of this passage in his work on Paul:

"Just as innumerable men of antiquity, whose leaden tablets inscribed with bann and curse [curse tablets] are still preserved, 'delivered' their opponents over to the gods of the underworld, so he 'delivers' the blasphemers Hymenaeus and Alexander the copper-smith to Satan. Similarly, he advises the Corinthians solemnly to 'deliver' an evil-doer to Satan" (A. Deissmann, *Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History* [2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; trans. W. E. Wilson; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1926], 70).

<sup>76</sup> Deissmann, *Light*, 303.

<sup>77</sup> Deissmann, *Light*, 301.

<sup>78</sup> Holland has recently offered a criticism of the *History of Religions School*. Interestingly, it reveals a wider theological, rather than historical, disagreement concerning methodology:

"All religions were the products of folklore or the borrowing from other religions, either directly or by adapting their opponents' arguments to promote their own worldviews. This method struck at the heart of the traditional understanding of Christian revelation and the authority of the Bible in particular. It assumed that the New Testament was not historically reliable and that it was virtually all the product of the emerging Gentile churches as they used their own traditions to teach their new-found faith in Jesus of Nazareth." (T. Holland,

meaning” of Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 5:5 is not clear until the “passage is read in connexion with the ancient custom of execration”.<sup>79</sup> Thus, Deissmann traces the antecedent to Pauline cursing back into the wider “Jewish and pagan” culture.

Thirdly, whilst Deissmann references Wunsch’s *Antike Fluchtafeln* to corroborate his understanding of “execration”,<sup>80</sup> it is the similar language of the *London Magical Papyrus* (at 46:334 [hereafter *LMP*])<sup>81</sup> that he cites to shed “light” on παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ:<sup>82</sup>

νεκυδαίμων,...παραδίδωμί σοι τὸν δ(εῖνα), ὅπως.<sup>83</sup>

In a footnote, Deissmann states that “The papyrus was written in the 4<sup>th</sup> cent. A. D., but its formulae are ancient.”<sup>84</sup> The potential for anachronism here, in the absence of supporting evidence from Deissmann, will prove a recurrent criticism of later exegetes who follow Deissmann’s lead in interpreting παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ in the light of the *LMP*.

Deissmann’s magical and curse interpretation is pivotal to readings of verse 5 throughout the twentieth century. However, as we will see, by the latter part of the twentieth century it will be considered fatally weakened—and rightly so—due to its

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*Contours of Pauline Theology: A Radical New Survey of the Influences on Paul’s Biblical Writings* [Fearn, Mentor, 2004], 53).

<sup>79</sup> Deissmann, *Light*, 302.

<sup>80</sup> R. Wunsch, *Antike Fluchtafeln* (Bonn: A. Marcus and E. Weber, 1907). Dobschütz (*Christian Life*, 389-390), similarly, cites Wunsch’s work in this context.

<sup>81</sup> As contained in F. G. Kenyon and H. I. Bell (eds), *Greek Papyri in the British Museum*, (vol. 1, London, 1893), 75.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. “a great part of the essence of the New Testament lies hidden in its language. Whoever has understood the nature of the language of the New Testament has also understood a great deal of the essence of the New Testament and of Early Christianity” (A. Deissmann, *The New Testament in the Light of Modern Research: The Haskell Lectures 1929* [London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1929], 74).

<sup>83</sup> Deissmann, *Light*, 302 n. 5.

<sup>84</sup> Deissmann, *Light*, 302 n. 5.



surface treatment of the Magical Papyri, and equivocal use of terminology such as ‘magic’ and ‘curse’ without consideration of Paul’s wider argument in 1 Corinthians 5.

#### 1.1.4 H. Conzelmann, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (1969) *1 Corinthians* (1975)

Conzelmann’s reading of 1 Corinthians 5:5 has been significant in its influence upon later exegetes. Unlike previous interpreters, Conzelmann initially argues for a curse interpretation of verse 5 based upon the phrase, εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός, which, by treating σάρξ as a synonym for σῶμα,<sup>85</sup> he understands unequivocally in terms of physical death:<sup>86</sup> “The destruction of the flesh can hardly mean anything else but death (cf. 11:30).”<sup>87</sup> Working backwards from this confident assertion, Conzelmann employs the concept of curse to complete his interpretation of verse 5.<sup>88</sup>

The shocking idea [i.e., the death of the offender] is to be understood in the first instance within the context of contemporary history: the *view of curse and ban* as entertained by the

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<sup>85</sup> Conzelmann points to Paul’s synonymous use of these terms in 1 Corinthians 15:39f. (H. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: a Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* [trans. J. W. Leitch; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975], 97 n. 35). For a discussion of σάρξ, cf. part 3.4.4.

<sup>86</sup> Similarly Goudge, who in spite of making no mention of cursing, is confident that εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός cannot ‘mean less’ than “The man will die” (H. L. Goudge, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [London: Methuen, 1903], 38).

<sup>87</sup> Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 97. Conzelmann’s interpretation of verse 5 in the light of 11:30 is unconvincing, due his spare argumentation. Firstly, there are few linguistic parallels between 5:5 and 11:30 (the key terms παραδιδόναι, Σατανᾶ, ὄλεθρος, σάρξ, πνεῦμα σωθῆ, ἡμέρα τοῦ κυρίου are all absent from 11:30). However, Conzelmann fails to anticipate and counter this objection (for example, by offering a broader theological interpretation [cf. our discussion of 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 in part 3.4.4.2]). Instead, he simply asserts his conclusion—that εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός means death—rather than arguing for it. Furthermore, he neglects to explain how he anticipates the death of the offender taking place. This is a clear weakness in Conzelmann’s interpretation of verse 5.

Nonetheless, the strength of Conzelmann’s discussion, in this instance, is his helpful unmasking of the role individual sensibility can play in the interpretation of verse 5. As Conzelmann states:

Schmiedel, the liberal, is offended by this [the idea that “destruction of the flesh” means death]. Allo, the Catholic, defends it, arguing that the idea is not inhuman, since the salvation of the soul is at stake. This is the well-known argument for the Inquisition! *O benedictae flammae!* (Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 97 n. 36).

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Lampe’s 1967 work in which he relates verse 5 to “excommunication” and “cursing” without interpreting εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός in terms of death: “the probability is quite strong that in 2 Cor. 2:5-11 we have evidence that the severe sentence passed in 1 Cor. 5:5 was not only intended to be, but actually was, remedial: an extreme and painful form of pastoral discipline rather than capital punishment” (G. W. H. Lampe, “Church Discipline and the Interpretation of the Epistles to the Corinthians”, in W. R. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule, and R. R. Niebour (eds), *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967], 352-354).



whole ancient and Jewish world. Here it is not a case of mere exclusion from the church, but of a dynamistic ceremony. The holiness of the church is conceived in metaphysical categories. Yet the point does not lie in the physical aspect of the working of a supernatural power, but in the fact that the accursed man is thrust out of the body of Christ into the realm of wrath. This is plain from the purpose of the ceremony, the saving of the πνεῦμα.<sup>89</sup>

Whilst death is clearly associated with Conzelmann's understanding of curse, it is unclear if death (as suggested by the words εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός) is the *consequence* of a curse (denoted by the phrase παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ), or the curse itself (i.e. εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός alone denotes a curse).

Like Dobschütz, Conzelmann considers the phrase παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ in relation to "the view of curse and ban as entertained by the whole ancient and Jewish world".<sup>90</sup>

The expression παραδοῦναι recalls rites of devotion (to the nether gods), Deissmann, *Light*, 302 [257]. PGM 4.1247f: παραδίδωμί σε εἰς τὸ μέλαν χάος ἐν ταῖς ἀπωλείαις, "I give you over to black chaos in utter destruction" (Moulton and Milligan, s.v. ἀπώλεια). Synagogue ban: Str.-B. 4.1:293-333.<sup>91</sup>

Like many other modern exegetes who argue for a curse reading of verse 5, Conzelmann draws upon Deissmann's foundational assessment of this passage. Although he fails to elaborate, Conzelmann implies that Paul curses the errant

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<sup>89</sup> Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 97-98 (emphasis added). Conzelmann's interpretation of verse 5 does not neglect to relate εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός to ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῇ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου: "The ('spirit' of the) man seized by God will be saved by the annihilating of the 'flesh' sold to sin. His immediate physical death preserves him from eternal death. The deeds of the flesh (Rom 8:13) are thereby radically destroyed" (Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 98 n. 40).

<sup>90</sup> Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 97.

<sup>91</sup> Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 97 n. 37. Conzelmann also notes Brun's work (L. Brun, *Segen und Fluch im Urchristentum* [Oslo: I kommisjon hos J. Dybwad, 1932]).



Corinthian by insisting upon a “rite of devotion”,<sup>92</sup> as part of a “dynamistic ceremony”,<sup>93</sup> which results in physical death.

Conzelmann’s reading is weakened by his equivocal use of terminology, such as “curse” and “ban”.<sup>94</sup> However, his argument is most seriously undermined by a lack of argumentation.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, like Dobschütz and Deissmann, he fails to justify the use of Greek curse material in relation to the first century Jewish apostle Paul.

**1.1.5 G. Forkman, *The Limits of Religious Community: Expulsion from the Religious Community with the Qumran Sect, within Rabbinic Judaism, and within Primitive Christianity* (1972)**

As his title suggests, Forkman’s study examines the treatment of expulsion within the Old Testament, the Qumran community, Rabbinic Judaism, and early Christianity. In particular, his treatment of παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ notes the nearest “parallels” to this phraseology to be within “antique pagan curse formulas”, by drawing upon (although not exclusively) Deissmann’s<sup>96</sup> and Conzelmann’s<sup>97</sup> studies of this passage. For example, Forkman quotes Conzelmann’s suggested “parallel” from the *Greek Magical Papyri* (hereafter *GMP*):<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Similarly, commenting upon 1 Corinthians 16:22, Conzelmann interprets ἀνάθεμα in terms of a “rite of devotion”: “The latter is pronounced over them in the formula of curse: *anathema*. This consigns the transgressor to God as his Judge. Does the formula in the service of worship mark the separating of the baptized and the unbaptized before the eucharist?” (Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 300).

<sup>93</sup> Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 97.

<sup>94</sup> Some scholars employ these terms synonymously (cf. G. P. Wiles, *Paul’s Intercessory Prayers: The Significance of the Intercessory Prayer Passages in the Letters of St Paul* [Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 24; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974], 116 n. 2).

<sup>95</sup> Even taking into account that Conzelmann writes within the context of a commentary.

<sup>96</sup> Deissmann, *Licht*, 257 (as noted by G. Forkman, *The Limits of Religious Community: Expulsion from the Religious Community within the Qumran Sect, within Rabbinic Judaism, and within Primitive Christianity* [trans. P. Sjölander; Coniectanea Biblica. New Testament Series 5; Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1972], 204 n. 146).

<sup>97</sup> H. Conzelmann, *Der erste Briefe an die Korinther* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1969), 118 n. 37 (as noted by Forkman, *Limits*, 204 n. 147).

<sup>98</sup> H. D. Betz (ed.), *The Greek Magical Papyri In Translation* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Chicago and London: The University Of Chicago Press, 1992) [hereafter, *GMP*]. The original Greek version of the *GMP* is found in

Go out, demon, for I shall bind you with unbreakable fetters of steel, and I give you over (παράδίδωμί σε) to the black chaos in perdition.<sup>99</sup>

However, Forkman's assessment of this text differs from Conzelmann's in that he does not consider it a "complete parallel" due to contextual differences: "It constitutes an exorcism with which a demon is driven out and is given over to chaos."<sup>100</sup> Despite this, Forkman concludes unequivocally that both of the texts to which Deissmann and Conzelmann draw attention are relevant to 1 Corinthians 5:5, in that they provide the "general background" to Paul's expression: the "milieu" of "pagan" and Jewish cursing.<sup>101</sup> In addition, Forkman's reading places cursing in Tanakh and birkat ha-minim *alongside* these "pagan formulas":<sup>102</sup>

The formulation in 1 Cor. 5:5 must therefore be described as a *solemn dynamic surrender to the power of evil*, a "devotion". It can be equated with the OT curses, with the birkat ha-minim of rabbinic Judaism, *and with the above-mentioned pagan formulas*. By a *curse* the deviator is given over to all that which is evil and devilish. And once the judgement has been pronounced, the punishment follows by itself. No further human measure is needed (emphasis added).<sup>103</sup>

Using, in particular, Job 2:6 as his intertext,<sup>104</sup> Forkman argues that in the same manner in which Job was subject to a curse at Satan's hand due to God's sanction, so the errant

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K. Preisendanz (ed.), *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, vol. 2 (Leipzig & Berlin, B. G. Teubner: 1931), (hereafter *PGM*).

<sup>99</sup> Forkman, *Limits*, 143 (quoting Conzelmann, *Korinther*, 118 n. 3, who in turn quotes *GMP*: 4:1247!).

<sup>100</sup> Forkman, *Limits*, 143.

<sup>101</sup> Forkman, *Limits*, 143.

<sup>102</sup> Rosner's assessment of Forkman (B. Rosner, "Temple and Holiness in 1 Cor 5", *Tyndale Bulletin* 42 [1991], 137-145 at 138 n. 5) gives the false impression that Forkman rejects the "pagan curse formulae" in favour of cursing in Tanakh:

The injunction 'you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh' in 1 Cor. 5:5 has been compared by...Hans Conzelmann...and others to pagan curse formulae...Forkman...however, has suggested an alternative background for this verse. He describes it as a 'solemn dynamic surrender to the power of evil', a 'devotion', comparable to various OT curses.

<sup>103</sup> Forkman, *Limits*, 143 (emphasis added).

<sup>104</sup> Forkman (*Limits*, 143) also references Deuteronomy 28 (a text we will explore in part three as part of our exegesis of 1 Corinthians 5).



Corinthian is delivered to Satan in the capacity of God's 'subordinate' to effect a positive outcome: the salvation of the πνεῦμα.<sup>105</sup> The effects of the curse are also understood in a similar manner to Job 1-2 and Deuteronomy 28: "material losses, personal tragedies, illnesses, and finally death".<sup>106</sup> Thus, Forkman concludes that παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ "means that he was subjected to the most powerful curse."<sup>107</sup>

An understanding of exclusion runs in tandem with Forkman's curse reading of παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ.<sup>108</sup> Thus, Paul's hand over phraseology is not associated with curse alone, as some argue,<sup>109</sup> but in terms of curse (or "charismatic devotion"<sup>110</sup>) and exclusion:<sup>111</sup>

In 1 Cor. 5:1-5 we found a much more vehement form of expulsion, a formal devotion, taken by the community and the apostle together. The actual judgement act has a liturgical character, possibly making use of a baptismal formula. In any case, it is seen as a sacral act in which the risen Lord takes part. The devotion entails the total expulsion of the sinner from the community.<sup>112</sup>

In addition to a "devotion" (which Forkman has explained with reference to cursing), παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ is also a metaphor for expelling the errant

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<sup>105</sup> Forkman, *Limits*, 143-144. "The devotion in 1 Cor. 5 was assumed to endure until the day of the Lord. But 2 Cor. 2 indicates that even according to Paul, expulsion could be revoked" (Forkman, *Limits*, 186).

<sup>106</sup> Forkman, *Limits*, 144.

<sup>107</sup> Forkman, *Limits*, 144.

<sup>108</sup> Forkman, *Limits*, 144.

<sup>109</sup> Contrary to those who argue that "The concept that the devotion should take the place of the expulsion the community had failed to carry out (Goguel, Kümmel, Odeberg) [Forkman argues that this] conflicts with the arrangement of the chapter" (Forkman, *Limits*, 204 n. 152).

<sup>110</sup> Forkman, *Limits*, 12.

<sup>111</sup> As Forkman states with assurance: "That he with this curse in practice was thrust out of the community seems obvious" (Forkman, *Limits*, 144).

<sup>112</sup> Forkman, *Limits*, 179. Cf. Goulder (M. D. Goulder, "Libertines? [1 Cor. 5-6]", *Novum Testamentum* 41 [1999], 334-348 at 341) who also interprets this passage liturgically.

Corinthian from “one area of power (Christ’s, i.e. the church) to another (Satan’s).”<sup>113</sup>

Curiously, Forkman concludes his reading of 1 Corinthians 5 by affirming the *partial* expulsion of the errant Corinthian.<sup>114</sup>

Forkman’s reading is commendable insofar as he seeks to understand Pauline cursing within the context of Jewish and Greek (which he describes as “pagan”) cursing.

However, like previous exponents of the *History of Religions School*, his understanding of Paul’s relationship to this material is unclear. Furthermore, Forkman is also opaque concerning what constitutes “parallel” material.

#### 1.1.6 G. P. Wiles, *Paul’s Intercessory Prayers: The Significance of the Intercessory Prayer Passages in the Letters of St Paul* (1974)

As part of a wider study of *Paul’s Intercessory Prayers*, Wiles examines Pauline cursing,<sup>115</sup> which he tentatively labels as “wish-prayers of a negative character”<sup>116</sup> or a “type of negative intercession”.<sup>117</sup> Wiles defines the former term, “wish-prayer”, as an “expression of a desire that God take action regarding the person(s) mentioned in the wish.”<sup>118</sup> In this context, a curse can be understood as a “negative” desire for harm to befall an individual. His latter term, “negative intercession”, signals a desire that God act for the ill of the errant Corinthian. Within the specific context of 1 Corinthians 5, this concept is rooted within an interpretation of Paul’s presence (παρὼν δὲ τῷ πνεύματι) in verse there:

[Paul’s] spirit is mediated to them σὺν τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ. It is with the help of (σὺν) the power of the Lord that there is a constantly effective intercessory link between himself and them. Even in ordinary times of bodily separation, Christ’s power is

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<sup>113</sup> Forkman, *Limits*, 144.

<sup>114</sup> Forkman, *Limits*, 151. Little explanation of ‘partial expulsion’ is provided.

<sup>115</sup> Wiles, *Intercessory*, 116-155. Wiles helpfully notes his synonymous use of the terms: ‘curse’; ‘imprecation’; ‘execration’; and ‘malediction’ (Wiles, *Intercessory*, 116 n. 2).

<sup>116</sup> Wiles, *Intercessory*, 116. For a discussion of imprecatory cursing, cf. part 2.1.4.

<sup>117</sup> Wiles, *Intercessory*, 121-122.

<sup>118</sup> Wiles, *Intercessory*, 22.



released by the network of mutual intercessory prayers, but on this critical occasion it is the power of the Lord as Judge which is brought into operation in a special way through Paul's pronouncement...Through the help of Christ he may be 'present' with them, and through the effective power of Christ's apostle and congregation take juridical action together.<sup>119</sup>

Wiles suggests that the joint action of Paul and the congregation, enabled by this intercessory action, may also be indicated by Paul's use of παραδοῦναι which "may mean 'We (rather than you) are to hand over.'"<sup>120</sup> Wiles interprets παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ, firstly, in terms of "excommunication", which removes "the protection of the church fellowship."<sup>121</sup> Secondly, he treats Deissmann's argument that "pagan parallels" to παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ can be found in "the ancient custom of execration, i.e., devoting a person to the gods of the lower world" as "conjecture".<sup>122</sup> Unlike many former advocates of a curse interpretation, Wiles does not consider extra-biblical curse material to be parallel to Pauline cursing, but rightly speaks in terms of a common language.<sup>123</sup> Drawing upon biblical material, he highlights the account of Job's handing over to Satan.<sup>124</sup> However, unlike many proponents of a curse reading of verse 5, Wiles follows Robertson and Plummer<sup>125</sup> by differentiating between "pagan and Jewish curses" and Paul's use of a "guarded" curse which "avoids...the vengeful intent of many pagan execrations".<sup>126</sup>

[Paul's "guarded" curse] is done 'in the name of the Lord Jesus' and 'with the power of our Lord Jesus'; therefore it must represent him who died for the weak man (8:11), and whose grace is present with them (1:3, 16:23). Its outcome is in the hands of the God whose final judgment will be made only through the merciful agency of this same Christ (1:8; cf. 2 Cor. 5:10).<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Wiles, *Intercessory*, 145-146.

<sup>120</sup> Wiles, *Intercessory*, 146 n. 5.

<sup>121</sup> Wiles, *Intercessory*, 148. Wiles also references verses 2 and 13 in support of this reading.

<sup>122</sup> Wiles, *Intercessory*, 148 n. 2 (quoting Deissmann, *Light*, 302).

<sup>123</sup> Wiles, *Intercessory*, 149. Again: "Now it is true that behind these curse formulae there may be seen the form and cadence of pagan execrations" (Wiles, *Intercessory*, 119).

<sup>124</sup> Job 2:6 quoted by (Wiles, *Intercessory*, 148 n. 2).

<sup>125</sup> "Robertson-Plummer, p. 100, point out the 'fundamental difference' between the evil intent of magic spells and curses and the apostle's attempt to rescue both offender and church in the name of Christ" (Wiles, *Intercessory*, 149 n. 3 quoting A. Robertson and A. Plummer, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1916], 100 n. †).

<sup>126</sup> Wiles, *Intercessory*, 149.

<sup>127</sup> Wiles, *Intercessory*, 149.



Laying speculation aside, Wiles confidently concludes that παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ signals:

that the man was being ‘devoted’ or exposed to the direct assaults of the powers of evil of this present age, power which momentarily held men in bondage. Satan was the supreme agent or head of these temporary powers, through whom hindrances and sicknesses were inflicted on men (e.g., I Thess. 2:18, II Cor. 12:7).<sup>128</sup>

In this instance, it is not merely “sickness” that is indicated by the words εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός. Rather, “Paul intended at least the possibility, or even the probability, of death”<sup>129</sup> in this “prophetic judicial injunction”.<sup>130</sup>

### 1.1.7 I. Havener, “A Curse for Salvation—1 Corinthians 5:1-5” (1979)

From the outset of his work, Havener is sensitive to those elements of early Christianity that are unpalatable to “modern sensitivities.”<sup>131</sup> Early Christianity is often “idealized”, he argues.<sup>132</sup> However, such idealization is only possible by “selectively” “ignoring” or “denying” some aspects of early Christianity “as revealed in the New Testament that do not appeal to our modern sensitivities.”<sup>133</sup> 1 Corinthians 5 is one such text that jars with our “modern sensitivities [and] underscore[s] how foreign to and/or undesirable for our own ecclesiastical life-style and manner of thinking practices in primitive Christianity could be”.<sup>134</sup>

In brief, we have in this chapter [1 Corinthians 5] a case of ecclesiastical discipline that is apparently carried out in a completely undemocratic, highly authoritarian manner by the

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<sup>128</sup> Wiles, *Intercessory*, 148.

<sup>129</sup> Wiles, *Intercessory*, 148. Wiles employs 1 Corinthians 11:29-32 in support of this conclusion (Wiles, *Intercessory*, 149).

<sup>130</sup> Wiles, *Intercessory*, 141. Wiles considers Galatians 1:8 and 1 Corinthians 16:22, which are related in “function”, but not in “form”, to 1 Corinthians 5:3-5. Cf. part 3.4.2.3.

<sup>131</sup> I. Havener, “A Curse for Salvation—1 Corinthians 5:1-5”, *Sin, Salvation and the Spirit: Commemorating the Fiftieth Year of the Liturgical Press* (D. Durken [ed.]; Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1979), 334-344 at 334. As we noted, Conzelmann made a similar point in his discussion of Schmiedel and Allo (Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 97 n. 36).

<sup>132</sup> Havener, “Curse”, 334.

<sup>133</sup> Havener, “Curse”, 334.

<sup>134</sup> Havener, “Curse”, 334. Havener’s hermeneutic differs from that of other scholars in that he accepts a disjuncture between his reading of the text and ecclesiastical practice. For example, a more biblically fundamentalist hermeneutic would maintain that church doctrine and practice should not differ from a determination of the meaning of the biblical text.



Apostle Paul. It involves a *ritual curse for the physical destruction of the guilty Christian* for the purpose of his salvation on the Day of the Lord.<sup>135</sup>

Elsewhere, Havener describes Paul's instruction to ritually curse the errant Corinthian as having been enacted in a "liturgical assembly".<sup>136</sup> It is this phrase that points us towards a fuller understanding of his use of the term "ritual curse". Havener contextualises Paul's "ritual curse" (in verse 5) within a wider liturgical framework, attested to by the context of verse 5 (in particular, verse 4).

Using Philippians 2:10 as his intertext, Havener infers that Paul's liturgical use of ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ signals a liturgical context when it appears elsewhere—in 1 Corinthians 5:4. Thus, Havener conceives of the "ritual curse" of verse 5 having been enacted in a "liturgical assembly". Crucially, the initial connection with cursing is made through an understanding of verse 4 in terms of an "invocation". The "proceedings" begin with the "invocation of the Lord Jesus",<sup>137</sup> which is crucial "because in ritual curses the name of Lord is, in fact, solemnly called upon."<sup>138</sup> Havener points to 1 Corinthians 16:22 as another example of an invocation in a 'ritual curse' for "Here the Lord (=Mar) is specifically invoked."<sup>139</sup> It is arguable that Havener interprets Paul through the lens of his liturgical tradition (within the order of Saint Benedict). That is not to deny the role of liturgy within the early church, but to alert us to the potential for anachronism and panliturgism: "a tendency to see signs of liturgy everywhere".<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Havener, "Curse", 334 (emphasis added).

<sup>136</sup> Havener, "Curse", 336. Havener also speaks of a "ritual action in the assembly of the congregation" (Havener, "Curse", 335).

<sup>137</sup> Hence, Havener's translation of verse 4: "When you and my spirit are assembled together under the invocation of our Lord Jesus" (Havener, "Curse", 334).

<sup>138</sup> Havener, "Curse", 336. Thus, Havener construes 1 Corinthians 5:4-5 as "When you and my spirit are assembled together under the invocation of our Lord Jesus, (I have decided) to hand such a one over to Satan by the power of our Lord Jesus for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the Day of the Lord" (Havener, "Curse", 334).

<sup>139</sup> Havener, "Curse", 336. For further consideration of this passage, see J. A. T. Robinson, "Traces of a Liturgical Sequence in 1 Cor. 16<sup>20-24</sup>", *Journal of Theological Studies* 4 (1953), 38-41.

<sup>140</sup> P. F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 47.

Like Tertullian, physical death is integral to Havener's understanding of "ritual curse" in verse 5 (Havener interprets σάρξ as a term 'associated' with the physical body).<sup>141</sup> Repentance does not feature in his reading of the verse, as Havener's definition of ὀλεθρος—'destruction'—does not allow any opportunity for the errant Corinthian to repent.<sup>142</sup> Instead, "capital punishment [is] required by Paul" as part of a "curse for salvation."<sup>143</sup>

Havener (uniquely amongst those scholars we survey) interprets the physical destruction of the body in the context of a Jewish belief in the link between blessing and longevity:

Paul's emphasis lies instead on the destruction of the physical body as a punishment for a particularly scandalous sin, and this needs to be understood in light of the fact, that for the Jews long life was considered a special blessing of life on earth by means of this punishment *syn tē dynamēi tou kyriou hēmōn Iēsou* ("by the power of our Lord Jesus").<sup>144</sup>

Like many previous exegetes, Havener highlights 1 Corinthians 11:29-30 as his intertext for interpreting εἰς ὀλεθρον τῆς σαρκός.<sup>145</sup> Like 1 Corinthians 5:5, in 11:29-30, the Corinthians are chastised in the form of physical illness and death, "so that those who have committed the fault may not be condemned along with the world (verse 32) at the final judgment."<sup>146</sup>

Strikingly, Havener's curse interpretation fails to make reference to Deissmann, who

<sup>141</sup> Havener, "Curse", 339-340.

<sup>142</sup> Havener, "Curse", 338-339. Havener points to the use of ὀλεθρος in 1 Thessalonians 5:3; 2 Thessalonians 1:9, and 1 Timothy 6:9 in support of his interpretation. Moreover, he rejects the possibility of repentance as it "would make no sense to hand the man over to Satan for the destruction of his 'evilness'...That would put Satan in the embarrassing position of dividing his own kingdom, a point which the Marcan Jesus thought to be patently ridiculous" (Havener, "Curse", 340).

<sup>143</sup> Havener, "Curse", 341.

<sup>144</sup> Havener, "Curse", 340.

<sup>145</sup> Although, in this instance, Havener ("Curse", 343 n. 28) follows Bousset (W. Bousset, "Der erste Brief an die Korinther", *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments neu überstezt und für die Gegenwart erklärt* 2 [3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1917], 133), Kuss (O. Kuss, *Die Briefe an die Römer, Korinther und Galater* [Regensburger Neues Testament 6, Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1940], 138), and Hein (K. Hein, *Eucharist and Excommunication. A Study in Early Christian Doctrine and Discipline* [European University Studies. Series 23. Theology 19; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1975], 101).

<sup>146</sup> Havener, "Curse", 340. We will argue similarly in part 3.4.4.2.



put forward one of the most enduring curse readings. Bultmann is the only proponent of a curse interpretation to figure in Havener's reading, though he features in relation to a discussion of ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι in verse 4—and not παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ in verse 5.<sup>147</sup>

It is perhaps unsurprising, in the absence of Deissmann's influence, that Havener makes no reference to any extra-biblical curses in relation to the phrasing παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ.<sup>148</sup> Instead, he understands παραδοῦναι “in the sense of deliverance to physical death”.<sup>149</sup> Moreover, the “capital punishment required by Paul leads ultimately to the sinner's salvation. We have here, in effect, a curse for salvation.”<sup>150</sup>

#### 1.1.8 A. Yarbro Collins, “The Function of ‘Excommunication’ in Paul” (1980)

A. Yarbro Collins' reading of 1 Corinthians 5:5 has been particularly influential upon subsequent discussion of this passage. In particular, critics of a curse or magical interpretation of παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ rarely fail to mention Yarbro Collins' treatment of verse 5.<sup>151</sup>

Having concluded that exclusion features in 1 Corinthians 5,<sup>152</sup> Yarbro Collins begins her treatment of verse 5 with a consideration of the “Pharisaic-rabbinic tradition”, into

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<sup>147</sup> Havener, “Curse”, 342 n. 9 (who notes R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* 1, [trans. K. Grobel; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951], 126-127). In contrast to Deissmann, Dobschütz features in the end notes. However, he is only cited with reference to the History of Religions background to the errant Corinthian's relationship with his “father's woman”, or γυνὴ πατρός in 1 Corinthians 5:1 (Havener, “Curse”, 342 n. 3).

<sup>148</sup> Ironically, Havener claims that “[the meaning of the] infinitive *paradounai* (“to hand over”)...is almost universally ignored by the commentators” (Havener, “Curse”, 341).

<sup>149</sup> Havener cites 1 Corinthians 11:23; 13:3; Galatians 2:20; and Romans 4:25; 8:32 in support of his understanding (Havener, “Curse”, 341).

<sup>150</sup> Havener, “Curse”, 341.

<sup>151</sup> See part 1.2.

<sup>152</sup> A. Yarbro Collins, “The Function of ‘Excommunication’ in Paul”, *Harvard Theological Review* 73 (1980), 251-263 at 253-254. Yarbro Collins points to verses 2 and 13 as clear support of this conclusion.

which she locates the famous *birkat ha-minim* and the “ban”.<sup>153</sup> However, she quickly rejects this material on the basis that it does not constitute a “real parallel”:

This ban is not a real parallel to 1 Corinthians 5, since it was only a partial exclusion for a limited period of time. Satan has no role either in the *birkat ha-minim* or in the ban.<sup>154</sup>

Yarbro Collins considers *GMP* to be more informative: “The procedure Paul instructs the Corinthians to carry out has a formal parallel and, in part, a parallel in meaning, in the Greek magical papyri.”<sup>155</sup> In particular, she follows Deissmann by citing the following “parallel”:<sup>156</sup>

“O ghost of a dead man (*nekydaimōn*), whoever you are, I hand over (*paradidōmi*) to you so-and-so, in order that he might not do such-and-such a deed.”<sup>157</sup>

It is sufficient for us to conclude that Yarbro Collins considers this fourth century C. E. “magical spell” from the *Greek Magical Papyri* to constitute a “formal parallel” to Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 5:<sup>158</sup> “Paul apparently believed that the guilty member of the Corinthian community could be submitted to Satan’s power by the spoken word of the Christian assembly under the appropriate circumstances.”<sup>159</sup> Further to Deissmann, Yarbro Collins<sup>160</sup> notes the existence of similar texts in Wünsch’s catalogue of Sethian curse tablets.<sup>161</sup> However, she rejects Conzelmann’s alleged ‘parallel’ (*GMP* 4:1246-

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<sup>153</sup> Yarbro Collins, “Function”, 251-263 at 254. Yarbro Collins (“Function”, 254 n. 5) draws upon Forkman’s study of *birkat ha-minim* and the ban (Forkman, *Limits*, 92-98).

<sup>154</sup> Yarbro Collins, “Function”, 251-263 at 254.

<sup>155</sup> Yarbro Collins, “Function”, 251-263 at 255.

<sup>156</sup> Yarbro Collins, “Function”, 251-263 at 255.

<sup>157</sup> Yarbro Collins, “Function”, 251-263 at 255 (who notes Deissmann, *Light*, 302). Cf. *GMP* 5:335-336.

<sup>158</sup> Yarbro Collins (“Function”, 255) states that the “spell” is ‘probably’ older than the fourth century C. E., and is characteristic of a form of “magical spell”.

<sup>159</sup> Yarbro Collins, “Function”, 251-263 at 255. Cf. Hargreaves, who understands παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ as placing the errant Corinthian “under the control of Satan. Paul and his readers believed that everyone was controlled by a number of invisible spirits. When someone became a Christian he was no longer under Satan’s spirit, but under the Spirit of Jesus” (J. H. M. Hargreaves, *A Guide to 1 Corinthians* [Theological Education Fund Study Guide 17; London: SPCK, 1978], 59).

<sup>160</sup> Yarbro Collins (“Function”, 256) quotes a binding spell contained on “a cursing tablet” by citing Deissmann (*Light*, 303).

<sup>161</sup> R. Wünsch, *Sethianische Verfluchungstafeln aus Rom* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1898) as cited by Büchsel, “*paradidōmi*”, 170 (as cited by Yarbro Collins, “Function”, 251-263 at 255 n. 8). Curiously,



1247) by arguing that “it is a demon who is handed over, not a human being.”<sup>162</sup>

On the basis of three further references within the *GMP*,<sup>163</sup> Yarbro Collins concludes that “*paradidōmi* is a technical term in Greek magic”.<sup>164</sup> Moreover, she contends that “[t]he tradition of Greek magic helps explain why the procedure advocated by Paul took the form it did and how the process was expected to work.”<sup>165</sup>

Yarbro Collins draws upon “parallels” with the *Dead Sea Scrolls* in order to explain the “communal aspect” and “eschatological framework” of verse 5 (that is, Paul’s words ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῇ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου).<sup>166</sup> In conclusion, she states that 1 Corinthians 5:5 differs from the *Dead Sea Scrolls* insofar as “[t]he expulsion involves curses in the Qumran documents and what should probably be called a magical procedure in 1 Corinthians 5.”<sup>167</sup>

Like many other interpretations of παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ we have considered, Yarbro Collins’ magical reading suffers from her use of underdetermined terminology: in particular, ‘magic’, ‘curse’, ‘parallel’, ‘formal parallel’, and ‘real parallel’. We will return to this problem at the end of part two. Furthermore, her eclectic approach in explaining Paul’s thought in terms of *GMP* and the *Dead Sea Scrolls* requires argumentation.

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Büchsel dismisses the relevance of Wünsch’s work, *Antike Fuchtafeln*, to verse 5: “The Texts...do not have παραδιδόναι in this sense [that is, the sense of Paul’s phrase παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ]” (Büchsel, “*paradidōmi*”, 170 n. 4). No further explanation of this conclusion is offered, despite Büchsel’s reliance upon Deissmann (who cites Wünsch’s work in support of his definition of ‘execrations’ [Deissmann, *Light*, 256]).

<sup>162</sup> Yarbro Collins, “Function”, 251-263 at 255 n. 8 (citing Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 97 n. 37).

<sup>163</sup> *GMP* 5:70-95; 5:174-180; 5:185-210.

<sup>164</sup> Yarbro Collins, “Function”, 251-263 at 255.

<sup>165</sup> Yarbro Collins, “Function”, 251-263 at 256.

<sup>166</sup> Yarbro Collins, “Function”, 251-263 at 256.

<sup>167</sup> Yarbro Collins, “Function”, 251-263 at 263.

## 1.2 *Non-Curse and Non-Magic Interpretations of Παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ*

We have critically examined a long tradition of interpreting 1 Corinthians 5:5 in terms of cursing and/or magic, dating from Patristic through to modern times. In this section, we will explore a variety of non-curse, and non-magic, interpretations of verse 5, the earliest of which—Chrysostom’s homily on 1 Corinthians—dates to the fourth century.<sup>168</sup> Chrysostom expounds the verse in terms of physical suffering and exclusion. However, he makes no reference to, nor implies, a concept of curse or magic in his interpretation (of this passage). Likewise, the modern scholar, Barrett, (whose reading of Paul’s hand over phraseology we will consider following our discussion of Chrysostom) also understands παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός in terms of physical suffering and “excommunication”. As with Chrysostom, neither cursing nor magic feature (nor are implied) in Barrett’s interpretation.

In 1.2.2, we will investigate Murphy-O’Connor’s reading of verse five. In contrast to Chrysostom and Barrett, Murphy-O’Connor argues that following his expulsion from the Corinthian community, the errant Corinthian was to experience a “form of physical suffering” which we will argue is better understood as psychological suffering (hence, our categorisation of his approach separately from Chrysostom and Barrett).<sup>169</sup> Even though one *could* interpret physical or psychological suffering as the results of a curse, Murphy-O’Connor makes no attempt to do so.

Finally, in 1.2.3 we will consider more fully Calvin’s foundational non-curse reading of verse 5, in which παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός is interpreted in terms of exclusion alone. His influence can be seen in the readings of a growing number of modern scholars, including those scholars whom we will consider in 1.2.3: Fee (in part 1.2.3.2); South (in part 1.2.3.3); Thiselton (in part 1.2.3.4); and

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<sup>168</sup> We will consider Chrysostom’s reading of verse 5 in 1.2.1.1.

<sup>169</sup> J. Murphy-O’Connor, *Becoming Human Together: The Pastoral Anthropology of St. Paul*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Good News Studies 2, Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1982), 170.



Garland (in part 1.2.3.5). Like Calvin, they interpret Paul's hand over phraseology dualistically in terms of "spheres": the "sphere" or domain of the Church; and the "sphere" of the "world" in which Satan reigns.

The errant Corinthian, they argue, is to be cast out of the "sphere" of the church—that is, he is to be handed over to Satan—and placed within the "sphere" of the world in which Satan rules. In this light, παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ functions as a *metaphor for exclusion*. Cursing not only fails to feature in this understanding (of verse 5), but is explicitly rejected by many of the scholars under consideration (in part 1.2.3).<sup>170</sup>

### 1.2.1 Non-Curse and Non-Magic Interpretations of παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ that Envisage Physical Suffering and Exclusion

#### 1.2.1.1 John Chrysostom, *Homilies on First Corinthians*, 15

Chrysostom's (c. 347-407) exegetical homily (number 15) on 1 Corinthians 5 deals systematically with Paul's instructions concerning the errant Corinthian πόρνος. Chrysostom envisages exclusion. Commenting upon verse 2, he argues that the Corinthian offender should be, "cast...out", "taken away", and "cut off".<sup>171</sup> Again, concerning verse 7, he associates the Corinthian offender with the "old leaven" that should be "purged out":

purge out the old leaven, that is, this evil one....by means of this example also he mightily drives the fornicator out of the Church.<sup>172</sup>

Dealing specifically with verse 5, Chrysostom's reading is more opaque (unlike later

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<sup>170</sup> In particular, South offers an extensive rejection of a curse reading of 1 Corinthians 5:5, which proves influential on later exegetes (such as Thiselton [A. C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New International Greek Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2000)]).

<sup>171</sup> Chrysostom, *Homily*, 15:2.

<sup>172</sup> Chrysostom, *Homily*, 15:5-8. Whilst Chrysostom clearly refers to the errant Corinthian as "old leaven", he is also careful not to restrict this term to this individual alone but rather extends this Pauline phrase to "priests" and, more generally, to "sin of every kind." For our discussion of the exclusion motif in 1 Corinthians 5, cf. part 3.3.

exegetes who are very explicit in their interpretation in terms of exclusion [see 1.2.3]). This lack of clarity may well be caused by the genre of writing: Chrysostom's work is a homily and not a textual commentary. Furthermore, the weight of his sermon in respect of verse 5 rests upon the phrases εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός and ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῇ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου and not παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ. Even so, it could be argued that like later exegetes (such as Barrett [cf. part 1.2.1.2] and Murphy-O'Connor [cf. part 1.2.2]), Chrysostom also understands the verse in terms of exclusion:

Then lest he should be thought too authoritative and his speech sound rather self-willed, mark how he makes them also partners in the sentence. For having said, "I have judged," he adds, "concerning him that hath so wrought this thing, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, ye being gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan..." "And my spirit." Again he sets himself at their head in order that *when they should pass sentence, they might no otherwise cut off the offender than as if he were present*... Then making it yet more awful, he saith, "with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ;" that is, either that Christ is able to give you such grace as that you should have power to *deliver him to the devil*; or that He is Himself together with you passing that sentence against him.<sup>173</sup>

The "sentence", expressed in the delivering of the man to Satan, is that he be "cut off"—excluded from the Corinthian body. Chrysostom's homily moves immediately from a discussion of this "sentence" to be passed, to Paul's words παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ. Paul, he argues, did not say "'Give up' such a one to Satan",<sup>174</sup> a phrase that could preclude the possibility of repentance', but "'deliver;' opening unto him the doors of repentance."<sup>175</sup>

In his discussion of 2 Corinthians 2, Chrysostom maintains that repentance took place in this instance: "'the sinner changed' and became better."<sup>176</sup> Chrysostom is aware that no mention is made of repentance and re-admittance to the community in 1 Corinthians 5. Nevertheless, he accounts for this situation, if unsatisfactorily, by arguing that Paul did not want to "free" the man from "fear":

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<sup>173</sup> Chrysostom, *Homily*, 15:3-4 (emphasis added).

<sup>174</sup> Chrysostom, *Homily*, 15:4.

<sup>175</sup> Chrysostom, *Homily*, 15:4.

<sup>176</sup> Chrysostom, *On Repentance and Almsgiving*, *Homily* 1:3:22.



In the former Epistle he gives the fornicator no hope of return, but orders that his whole life should be spent in repentance, lest he should make him less energetic through the promise. For he said not, “Deliver him up to Satan,” that having repented he might be commended again unto the Church. But what saith he? “That he may be saved in the last day.” For he conducts him on unto that time in order to make him full of anxiety...he waits for him [the errant Corinthian] to do the work that so he may then receive the favor. For if he had said this at the beginning he might have *set him free from the fear*. Wherefore he not only does not so, but by the instance of leaven allows him not even a hope of return, but reserves him unto that day: “Purge out (so he says) the old leaven;” and, “let us not keep the feast with old leaven.” *But as soon as he had repented, he brought him in again with all earnestness.*<sup>177</sup>

The offending Corinthian is delivered to Satan as to a “schoolmaster”: he is the one who instructs and disciplines the errant Corinthian.<sup>178</sup> Whilst this discipline does not envisage physical death, it does include corrective *physical punishment*—as is indicative in the phrase εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός. Chrysostom’s explanation of why the Corinthian’s σάρξ is targeted is manifestly influenced by an ascetic belief: “For because inordinate eating and carnal luxuriousness are the parents of desires, it is the flesh which he chastises.”<sup>179</sup> Chrysostom argues that the Corinthian is to suffer under Satan’s tutelage in the same physical manner in which Job suffered:<sup>180</sup> an “agrievous sore or some other disease” is to afflict his body.<sup>181</sup> As in the case of Job (2:6), Satan is restrained: he cannot go beyond the destruction of the flesh.<sup>182</sup>

Strikingly, Chrysostom makes no reference to the concept of curse in his homily, even though his choice of intertexts (Job and 1 Corinthians 11:32) feature frequently within many later scholars’ curse readings.<sup>183</sup> Whilst this is curious, it should be noted that Chrysostom’s non-curse interpretation of εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός is justified. A crucial distinction is required: *whilst physical suffering is consistent with the desired*

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<sup>177</sup> Chrysostom, *Homily*, 15:9 (emphasis added).

<sup>178</sup> Chrysostom, *Homily*, 15:4.

<sup>179</sup> Chrysostom, *Homily*, 15:4.

<sup>180</sup> Chrysostom (*Homily*, 15:4) is careful not to impugn Job’s moral rectitude: Job’s suffering was for “brighter crowns”, whereas the errant Corinthian’s suffering is for the “loosing of sins”.

<sup>181</sup> Chrysostom, *Homily*, 15:4.

<sup>182</sup> In addition to the example of Job, Chrysostom cites Paul’s words concerning judgment at the Eucharist in 1 Corinthians 11:32 (Chrysostom, *Homily*, 15:4). Rather than arguing that physical suffering ensued from the ‘unworthy’ consumption of the Eucharist meal, he addresses a potential objection concerning a difference in agency between 1 Corinthians 5:5 and 11:32: in 11:32, it is the Lord who judges; here, in verse 5, it is Paul in concert with the Corinthians who judge.

<sup>183</sup> See part 1.1.

consequences of many curses,<sup>184</sup> the experience of physical suffering does not necessarily denote the existence of a curse. As such, advocates of the curse interpretation cannot point solely to εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός as the basis of their reading. Rather, they must find a means of attributing ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός to the concept of cursing. In light of this issue, in part three we will argue for a curse understanding of εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός by interpreting this phrase in conjunction with παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ.

### 1.2.1.2 C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1968 [2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1971])

Barrett's consideration of 1 Corinthians 5:5 makes no reference to the concept of cursing, and he resists any reference to magic.<sup>185</sup> Even so, Barrett does note Deissmann's reference to the *LMP*:

If a man was handed over to Satan it was not that Satan might have his way with him, but with a view to his ultimate salvation; Satan in fact was being used as a tool in the interests of Christ and the church. There is thus, as well as a *real verbal parallel*, a *substantial difference* in the papyrus quotation adduced by Deissmann (*Light from the Ancient East* (1910), p. 304): Daemon of the dead..., I deliver (παραδίδωμι) to thee so-and-so, on order that (ὅπως)...(*London Magical Papyrus* 46. 334 ff.=K. Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae* i. p. 192).<sup>186</sup>

Barrett fails to unpack his phrase “real verbal parallel”.<sup>187</sup> It is undeniable that the term—παραδίδωμι—features in both verse 5 and the *LMP*. However, to call it a “real verbal parallel” suggests a value judgment beyond this mere, well documented, observation.<sup>188</sup> One might have expected Barrett to echo Deissmann's assessment that rather than two coincidental terms, a relationship (possibly in the broadest sense) exists

<sup>184</sup> As we will see in our discussion of cursing in part 2.

<sup>185</sup> Specifically, Barrett (C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, [2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; London: A. & C. Black, 1971], 125) resists contextualising Paul's use of σύν (in verse 5) within a magical context. Cf. Deissmann, *Light*, 302.

<sup>186</sup> Barrett, *Corinthians*, 126 (emphasis added).

<sup>187</sup> Previously, Barrett addresses Johnson's (S. E. Johnson, “The Dead Sea Manual of Discipline and the Jerusalem Church in Acts” in K. Stendahl [ed.], *The Scrolls and the New Testament* [London: SCM Press, 1958], 129-142 at 139) suggestion that a ‘parallel’ exists between the “removal of the erring member” and the “discipline of the Qumran community (I QS v. 26-vi.I). Barrett rejects Johnson's suggestion as too ‘generalised’, whilst affirming “some sort of relationship between primitive Christianity and the Qumran sect” (Barrett, *Corinthians*, 122-123).

<sup>188</sup> Emphasis added.



between παραδίδωμι in verse 5 and the *LMP*. However, Barrett avoids this conclusion, having argued for a “substantial difference” between Paul and the *LMP*, namely the role of Satan.

Following Calvin,<sup>189</sup> Barrett argues that Satan exercises his “limited” “authority” in the sphere outside the church.<sup>190</sup> Satan is not free to “have his way” with somebody outside the church; rather, he works towards a person’s “ultimate salvation”.<sup>191</sup> In this light, the *LMP* cannot be considered “parallel” material to 1 Corinthians 5,<sup>192</sup> for it does not envisage the victim’s salvation.<sup>193</sup>

Barrett’s conclusion underscores the failure of Deissmann and other advocates of the curse interpretation to articulate clearly the relationship between their extra-biblical material and verse 5, in spite of the differences in context and outcome. Barrett highlights a weakness in argumentation which we must surpass if we are to articulate a more persuasive curse interpretation of verse 5.

Barrett tentatively interprets verse 5 as a call to “excommunication” by considering the chapter as a whole:

From the rest of the chapter (especially verses 7, 13) it seems that the practical step Paul wished the Corinthian church to take was to exclude the offender from their society, to excommunicate him (though this word must not be taken in an anachronistic way).<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Barrett, *Corinthians*, 126. Whilst being dependent upon Calvin, Barrett avoids Calvin’s wider conclusion that verse 5 contains no physical punishment, and that παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ is an expression for excommunication (see 1.2.3.1 for a fuller discussion of Calvin).

<sup>190</sup> Barrett, *Corinthians*, 126. As we will see (in 1.2.3), this argument pre-dates Calvin.

<sup>191</sup> Barrett, *Corinthians*, 126.

<sup>192</sup> Other scholars who deny any form of ‘parallel’ or relationship between Paul’s instruction to the Corinthians in verse 5 and the formulae contained in the *GMP* point to the absence of Satan as a crucial dissimilarity (see part 1.2.3).

<sup>193</sup> Elsewhere, Barrett (*Corinthians*, 126) is comfortable quoting from Jewish sources, such as the Mishnah (*Sanhedrin* 6:2). It is possible that Barrett’s rejection of the *LMP* is also due to its non-Jewish flavour. Furthermore, it remains a possibility that Barrett does not like the idea of comparing the ‘religious’ writings of the apostle Paul with the so-called ‘magical’ *LMP*.

<sup>194</sup> Barrett, *Corinthians*, 125-126.

As we have noted, Barrett develops his reading of verse 5 by adopting Calvin's interpretation concerning "spheres" (which we will consider in part 1.2.3.1). Excommunication is central to this interpretative approach, as Barrett recognises in a more assertive reading: "To be excluded from the sphere in which Christ's work was operative was to be thrust back into that in which Satan still exercised authority."<sup>195</sup> In contrast to those scholars we will consider in due course (in part 1.2.3), Barrett's interpretation envisages excommunication coupled with physical suffering and possibly even death—εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός:

Satan's power, though limited, was nevertheless real. He would destroy the offender's flesh. This does not mean only the flesh as a source of moral evil...but the physical flesh itself, a realm in which Paul himself received Satan's attention (2 Cor. xii. 7). Suffering at least is meant (cf. Acts xiii. II), probably death (cf. Acts v. 5, 10; also I Cor. xi.30).<sup>196</sup>

Strikingly, these consequences are not inconsistent with the results of what many would label a 'curse',<sup>197</sup> although as we have already noted, Barrett does not describe them in this manner (nor is he logically compelled to). Barrett envisages a similar role for physical suffering in 1 Corinthians 11:30: "Those who abused the Lord's table were exposing themselves to the power of demons, who were taken to be the cause of physical disease...better...to suffer physical punishment now than to be condemned hereafter."<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Barrett, *Corinthians*, 126.

<sup>196</sup> Barrett, *Corinthians*, 125-126. Barrett is not alone in this interpretation. Cf. L. Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary* [Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976], 88-89.

Again, Bruce (F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians* [New Century Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971], 55) interprets παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ in terms of "expulsion from the community" whilst εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός, and in particular ὄλεθρος, suggests that "mere affliction or sickness may be indicated...the offence was perhaps held to be so serious that the offender's only chance of having his spirit...saved in the day of the Lord Jesus was by suffering bodily death here and now." See also Fisher (F. Fisher, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians* [Waco: Word Books, 1975], 77), who reads παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ in terms of 'excommunication' and physical "affliction" (death is not mentioned).

<sup>197</sup> One of Barrett's intertextual references is Acts 5:10, which many scholars have interpreted in terms of the concept of curse.

<sup>198</sup> Barrett, *Corinthians*, 275.



Barrett's rejection of the relevance of the *LMP* in relation to verse 5, because of the role of Satan is the least convincing aspect of his reading.<sup>199</sup> However, it does provide us with an insight into what Barrett means by "real verbal parallel".<sup>200</sup>

### 1.2.2 Non-Curse and Non-Magic interpretations of παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ that Envisage Psychological Suffering and Exclusion

J. Murphy-O'Connor, "1 Corinthians, V, 3-5"<sup>201</sup>  
*1 Corinthians* (1979);  
*Becoming Human Together: The Pastoral Anthropology of St. Paul* (1982)<sup>202</sup>

Murphy-O'Connor's 1979 commentary on 1 Corinthians<sup>203</sup> interprets the penalty meted out to the incestuous man (in 1 Corinthians 5) in terms of "expulsion", "exclusion", and "excommunication".<sup>204</sup> Murphy-O'Connor sees evidence of Paul's desire to see the man expelled from the Corinthian body in verses 2 and 7.<sup>205</sup> Elsewhere, he specifically interprets Paul's words in verse five as a call to "excommunication":

Most significant of all, however, is Paul's understanding of what excommunication implies. It is a handing over "to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, in order that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord" (1 Cor 5:5).<sup>206</sup>

The "handing over" of the Corinthian offender "to Satan" places the man outside the

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<sup>199</sup> Cf. our discussion of Satan and Human Suffering in part 3.4.3.

<sup>200</sup> As we have noted, we will discuss this problematic approach to Pauline cursing at the end of part 2.

<sup>201</sup> J. Murphy-O'Connor, "1 Corinthians, V, 3-5", *Revue Biblique* 84 (1977), 239-245.

<sup>202</sup> 1977 (1<sup>st</sup> ed.).

<sup>203</sup> J. Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians* (New Testament Message, Vol. 10, Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1979).

<sup>204</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians*, 41-42.

<sup>205</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians*, 41.

<sup>206</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *Becoming*, 169. Similarly, Talbert treats παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ as a "synonym for 'Let him...be removed from among you' (v.2c), for 'Cleanse out the old leaven' (v.7), and for 'Drive out the wicked person from among you' (v. 13b). It refers to excommunication, a practice not uncommon in early Christianity". Talbert's reading does not preclude the possibility of "physical suffering" (C. H. Talbert, *Reading Corinthians: A Literary and Theological Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* [New York: Crossroad, 1987], 16).

church “camp” which is “controlled by God”, and instead into the “camp” of the “world” which is “dominated by forces hostile to God and personalized in the figure of Satan.”<sup>207</sup> Murphy-O’Connor locates this dualistic Pauline theology within the context of his “Jewish contemporaries” (although he cites no specific Jewish sources).<sup>208</sup>

Having been “handed over to Satan”—or excommunicated—the man’s salvation (which is the ultimate goal of excommunication in Murphy-O’Connor’s reading of Paul in the chapter) was to be secured through the “destruction of the flesh”. As Murphy-O’Connor admits, a key difficulty with this reading is in explaining how the man’s σάρξ, understood as “the whole person as oriented away from God”,<sup>209</sup> could be “destroyed” within the “hostile” “camp” opposed to God, and not exacerbated.<sup>210</sup> He creatively navigates around this problem by coupling excommunication with “a form of physical suffering”, which, when experienced outside the church, will cause the errant Corinthian to “reconsider his behaviour”:

Within the community he was assisted by the creative love of the other members. In the ‘world’ he would be but one isolated unit among many because this love would be withdrawn from him (1 Cor 5:11). Since creative love is an experienced reality its deprivation would be a form of physical suffering which Paul hoped would bring the sinner to his senses. He expected the excommunicate to become acutely conscious of the sudden difference in his personal situation and, in consequence, to reconsider his behaviour. To this extent, therefore, the grace of Christ incarnate in the community would continue to exercise an influence on him, making it possible for the ‘spirit’ to be saved. Paul does not speak of a return to the community but nothing in the context excludes this possibility.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Murphy-O’Connor, *1 Corinthians*, 41-42.

<sup>208</sup> As we will see in the light of our study of Calvin in part 1.2.3, it is likely that Murphy-O’Connor’s understanding of verse 5 has been influenced by Calvin’s exegesis, despite the lack of explicit reference to Calvin.

<sup>209</sup> Murphy-O’Connor, *1 Corinthians*, 42.

<sup>210</sup> “By being expelled from the community the sinner is no longer protected by it. He is exposed without defense to the value-system of the ‘world’ and so subjected to pressures hostile to his authentic development. Here Paul uses ‘Satan’ to connote the same reality that he elsewhere designates as Sin. We should expect such exposure to reinforce the impulses of the ‘flesh’ because, as we have seen, it is only in the freedom guaranteed by the community that the ‘spirit’ has an opportunity to dominate the residual desires of the ‘flesh’. Paul, on the contrary, claims that excommunication will lead to ‘destruction of the flesh’” (Murphy-O’Connor, *Becoming*, 169-170).

<sup>211</sup> Murphy-O’Connor, *Becoming*, 170.



The claims made in this interpretation require careful consideration. In particular, the role of a “form of physical suffering” in his reading is of specific interest to this study, given the interpretation of some scholars who read εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός as the physical suffering that results from a curse. Murphy-O’Connor’s definition of physical suffering is different from the other exegetes we have considered:

A number of exegetes find here an allusion to physical suffering and even death, but had Paul been thinking along these lines he would have expressed himself in terms similar to those found in 1 Cor 11:30. In itself the language is no stronger than that employed in Rom 6:6-7. Moreover, the contrast between ‘flesh’ and ‘spirit’ is most naturally interpreted existentially, and sound methodology demands that other avenues should be explored only if this approach should prove abortive.<sup>212</sup>

Thus, εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός is not an anthropological statement, referring to the destruction of the human person, but an existential designation, calling for the destruction of the “the whole person as oriented away from God”.<sup>213</sup> This binary is, however, fallacious, for either way physical suffering is *not* precluded. Whilst physical suffering is explicit within the anthropological reading, it *may also be implicit* within the existential reading; physical suffering could be the vehicle by which the sin-oriented Corinthian is brought to “reconsider his behaviour”.<sup>214</sup>

If one were to interpret παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ in terms of a curse, one might well wish to see physical suffering implicit in εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός. The option of interpreting σάρξ anthropologically or existentially is a subsequent issue to be resolved by, for example, examining the contextual use σάρξ/πνεῦμα elsewhere in Paul’s writing.<sup>215</sup> The use of σάρξ/πνεῦμα within the writings of other Graeco-Roman

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<sup>212</sup> Murphy-O’Connor, *Becoming*, 169.

<sup>213</sup> Murphy-O’Connor, *1 Corinthians*, 42.

<sup>214</sup> Murphy-O’Connor, *Becoming*, 170.

<sup>215</sup> Whilst outwith the σάρξ/πνεῦμα binary, and in a non-disciplinary context, it is noteworthy that Paul’s σάρξ was afflicted to ensure humility (2 Corinthians 12:7). For further discussion, cf. part

authors might also help clarify Paul's use of this terminology. Furthermore, an examination of Paul's intertextual allusions in 1 Corinthians 5 might bring some clarity to this complex linguistic construction. As physical suffering is not precluded by an existential interpretation of σάρξ in verse 5, we will not focus upon scholars' understanding of this term at this stage. Instead, we will consider σάρξ/πνεῦμα as a part of our wider exegesis of 1 Corinthians 5 in part three.

Murphy-O'Connor offers a technical definition of his understanding of the "form of physical suffering" entailed in verse 5: a "deprivation" of "creative love":

Since creative love is an experienced reality its deprivation would be *a form of physical suffering* which Paul hoped would bring the sinner to his senses.<sup>216</sup>

It could be argued that the "physical suffering" to which Murphy-O'Connor refers could be accurately designated psychological suffering and reproof: through the psychological pain of exclusion, the outsider will take the appropriate action to ensure re-admittance to the Corinthians' community. Murphy-O'Connor's commentary on 1 Corinthians offers another window on his conception of physical suffering:

Paul's hope was that the sinner would change his pattern of behaviour, and conceived excommunication as the stimulus that would produce this effect. He could afford to do so because he envisaged the christian [*sic*] community as a space inhabited by those who had 'put on love which binds everything together in perfect harmony' (Col 3:14). Anyone who had experienced the security, protection, and encouragement afforded by such love would, he believed, *suffer severe pain* when cast out into the cold egocentricity of the 'world'. The difference between the two modes of being would become inescapably clear, and the sharp sense of loss should force the sinner to recognize that the conduct which had merited the withdrawal of love was incompatible with genuine commitment to Christ. Once the 'flesh' had been 'destroyed' in this way, the 'spirit' was free to dominate. Once this point had been reached there is no obstacle to the return of the erring brother to full communion. Paul does not mention this in v. 5, but nothing in the verse excludes it.<sup>217</sup>

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### 3.4.3.

<sup>216</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *Becoming*, 170.

<sup>217</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians*, 42.



Murphy-O'Connor's psychological reading of 1 Corinthians 5 is open to the charge of anachronism. Nowhere in this text does Paul speak in such subtle terms of the psychological impact of exclusion or of "creative love".<sup>218</sup> Nor, contrary to Murphy-O'Connor, does Paul suggest that there is no love or sense of community to be found outside the church. Secondly, there is nothing to indicate in 1 Corinthians 5 that Paul "expected the excommunicate to become acutely conscious of the sudden difference in his personal situation and, in consequence, to reconsider his behaviour".<sup>219</sup> In actuality, Paul's emphasis throughout chapter 5 is predominantly focussed upon the Corinthians as a corporate body. When he deals with the errant Corinthian, it is due to the danger he poses to the wider group—a danger the Corinthians appear to be unaware of.

It is possible that Murphy-O'Connor's ecclesiastical commitments influence some of his conclusions. For example, in spite of the fact that many exegetes have interpreted verse 5 in terms of eschatological salvation, Murphy-O'Connor argues (without mentioning any alternative readings of this verse) that it cannot be understood in this manner:

It is certainly illegitimate to interpret v. 5 as meaning that the sinner must be excluded until the last day, because 'salvation', for Paul, implies membership in the community.<sup>220</sup>

We cannot help but wonder if Murphy-O'Connor's confidence regarding this interpretation is not informed by his Catholic background in which there is no salvation outwith membership of the Roman Catholic Church (*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*).<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> However, the Corinthians may well have believed it existed in the form of the errant Corinthian's incestuous relationship!

<sup>219</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *Becoming*, 170.

<sup>220</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians*, 42.

<sup>221</sup> Other ecclesiastical concerns are evident. For example, Murphy-O'Connor interprets 1 Corinthians 5 as a "model" for church structure:

Whilst the evidence is insufficient to draw a firm conclusion on this point, there is persuasive evidence which demonstrates Murphy-O'Connor's concern to present Paul in a good light:

If read carelessly Paul's decision appears brutal, but there is no doubt that he conceived such excommunication, not as a punishment, but as a remedy. The ultimate goal is the salvation of the individual, and it is important to perceive how Paul expected this to be achieved.<sup>222</sup>

Paul is not "brutal", and his "remedy" to the situation is not to be considered a "punishment".<sup>223</sup> Clearly, Murphy-O'Connor experiences considerable unease with this portion of the Pauline corpus. His response is to sanitise Paul's pronouncement. Even though facing competition from so-called "false apostles", Paul is reluctant to impose his authority in this matter, "Yet something had to be done, and so Paul avails himself of the only solution open to him."<sup>224</sup> Again:

HAVING DONE HIS BEST [*sic*] to deal with the divisions in the community...Other facets of their life did not appear to them to give any cause for concern but when these came to Paul's attention...he felt obliged to take action.<sup>225</sup>

Paul "did his best" and was "obliged" to proscribe the expulsion of the errant Corinthian. In the light of such an explicitly benign view of Paul, it is worthwhile considering if Murphy-O'Connor's Paul *could* have expelled and cursed the Corinthian

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If Paul found it impossible to order the expulsion of the offender, he certainly made his opinion clear. He did so in a way that is a model for the relationship of a bishop to a parish. The parish is a local church in which the bishop does not live but for which he has responsibility. Paul was dealing with Corinth from Ephesus on the other side of the Aegean Sea. His strategy was to claim spiritual presence in the meeting at Corinth that debated the issue. This both affirmed the independence of the church there, and gave him a voice in its affairs (Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians*, 55).

Again: "In 1 Corinthians, on the contrary, we see a definite development in his sensitivity to the need of the local church for genuine autonomy if it is to develop normally" (Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians*, 55).

<sup>222</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians*, 41.

<sup>223</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians*, 41.

<sup>224</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians*, 41.

<sup>225</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians*, 39.



man. With this in mind, it is of little surprise that Murphy-O'Connor makes no mention of any curse interpretations of 1 Corinthians 5. Whilst he does not mention the concept of curse, there is nothing to preclude such a reading—if one interprets the affliction from a curse in psychological terms.<sup>226</sup>

### 1.2.3 Non-Curse interpretations of 1 Corinthians 5:5 that Envisage Exclusion Alone

#### 1.2.3.1 Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*; *Institutes* 4

Calvin (1509-1564), in his commentary on 1 Corinthians, rejects Chrysostom's interpretation of verse 5 (which envisaged physical suffering and exclusion).<sup>227</sup> Instead, he interprets παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ in terms of excommunication alone: no reference to cursing is made, and no physical punishment is entailed.<sup>228</sup>

To *deliver over to Satan*, they think [that is, Chrysostom and those who follow him], means nothing but the infliction of a severe punishment upon the body. But when I examine the whole context more narrowly, and at the same time compare it with what is stated in the Second Epistle, I give up that interpretation, as forced and at variance with Paul's meaning, and understand it simply of excommunication. For *delivering over to Satan* is an appropriate expression for denoting excommunication; for as Christ reigns *in* the Church, so Satan reigns *out of* the Church...he who is cast out of the Church is in a manner delivered over to the power of Satan, for he becomes an alien, and is cast out of Christ's kingdom.<sup>229</sup>

Calvin's exegesis involves two distinct interpretative moves. Firstly, he claims to "examine the whole context more narrowly"<sup>230</sup> (by implication, other exegetes, such as Chrysostom,<sup>231</sup> neglect the wider context in which verse 5 is located). However, Calvin

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<sup>226</sup> In this light, one could argue that Job not only suffered the physical suffering of boils, but he also experienced the psychological pain of the death of his family.

<sup>227</sup> See part 1.2.1.1 for a discussion of Chrysostom's interpretation of verse 5. We will recall that Chrysostom refrains from employing, or implying, a concept of curse or magic.

<sup>228</sup> J. Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* (trans. J. Pringle; vol. 1; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1948), 185.

<sup>229</sup> Calvin, *Corinthians*, 185.

<sup>230</sup> Calvin, *Corinthians*, 185.

<sup>231</sup> Interestingly, Calvin does not mention Tertullian's curse/death reading of verse 5 (see 1.1.1), which might suggest that this was, in Calvin's experience, a minority reading.

does not elaborate on exactly what he considers to constitute the “whole context” or in what manner the context negates Chrysostom’s reading.

Secondly, Calvin selects Paul’s “Second Epistle” (undoubtedly 2 Corinthians 2) as his intertext with which to interpret Paul’s words: παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ.<sup>232</sup> Historically, other interpreters have also employed 2 Corinthians 2:5-11 as an intertext for 1 Corinthians 5:1-13.<sup>233</sup> In Paul’s second epistle (and in contrast to his first), he adopts a pastoral tone calling upon the Corinthians to “forgive”, “comfort”, and “reaffirm” their “love” for an unnamed offender who has been disciplined by the Corinthians. Thus, exclusion contains the possibility of re-admittance to the church through repentance: “For the object of excommunication being to bring the sinner to repentance and remove bad examples”.<sup>234</sup>

No mention is made of physical suffering in 2 Corinthians 2. Thus, on this basis, Calvin dismisses the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5:5 in terms of physical suffering as “forced and at variance with Paul’s meaning.”<sup>235</sup> Commenting upon the Pauline phrase εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός, Calvin argues that:

Paul’s meaning is not that the person who is chastised is given over to Satan to be utterly ruined, or so as to be given up to the devil in perpetual bondage, but that it is a temporary condemnation, and not only so, but of such a nature as will be salutary. For as the salvation equally with the condemnation of the spirit is eternal, he takes the *condemnation of the flesh* as meaning *temporal* condemnation. “We will condemn him in this world for a time, that the Lord may preserve him in his kingdom.”

Thirdly, following Augustine,<sup>236</sup> Satan is understood metonymically as that arena, or kingdom, outwith the Church in which Satan, and not Christ, reigns.<sup>237</sup> This particular

<sup>232</sup> Elsewhere, Calvin employs Matthew 18:18-20 as an intertext for the phrase σὺν τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ in verse 4.

<sup>233</sup> For example, consider Chrysostom who also interprets 1 Corinthians 5 in light of 2 Corinthians 2:5-11 (see 1.2.1.1).

<sup>234</sup> *Institutes*, 4:12:8.

<sup>235</sup> Calvin, *Corinthians*, 185.

<sup>236</sup> Calvin quotes from Augustine’s work a number of times in his discussion of church discipline. In particular, he seeks to read Augustine’s discourse with the Donatists in light of his own conflict with the Anabaptists (cf. *Institutes* 4:12:11-12).

<sup>237</sup> Cf. Morris (*Corinthians*, 88) who points to Ephesians 2:12, Colossians 1:13, and 1 John 5:19



interpretative move is crucial, for it enables Calvin to read παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ in terms of excommunication.<sup>238</sup> Thus, to hand over to Satan involves placing an individual outside of the sphere in which “Christ reigns” (Calvin’s dualism necessitates existence outside of the church as being within Satan’s domain).<sup>239</sup> The means by which Calvin understands an individual’s ejection from the church is excommunication.

Whilst neither cursing, magic, nor physical suffering feature in Calvin’s reading of verse 5,<sup>240</sup> Calvin does evidence an understanding of curse (or “anathema”<sup>241</sup>) which resonates strongly with ancient understandings of the consequences of a curse:<sup>242</sup>

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in support of this interpretation.

<sup>238</sup> Modern interpreters employ a similar line of exegesis. For example, Synder interprets παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ in terms of two ‘ages’:

Paul has already determined (v.3) that this man should be delivered to Satan...Satan then belongs to the old age, to that time when we seek our own way (flesh) and cannot respond affirmatively to the revelation of God (sin). To deliver the man to Satan, then, is to return him to the old age...He has prematurely arrived in the kingdom, the new age (G. F. Snyder, *First Corinthians: A Faith Community Commentary* [Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1992], 61).

<sup>239</sup> Calvin, *Corinthians*, 185. See also *Institutes*, 4:12:5.

<sup>240</sup> Cf. John Knox (who studied with Calvin in Geneva), *The Order of Excommunication and of Public Repentance*, written five years after Calvin’s death and adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland:

*here I, in thy name, and at the commandment of this thy present congregation, cut off, seclude, and excommunicate from thy body, and from our society, N., as one person scandalous, proud, a contemner, and one member, for this present [time] altogether corrupted and pernicious to the body. And this his sin (albeit with sorrow of heart), by virtue of our ministry, we bind and pronounce the same to be bound in heaven and earth. We further give over into the hands and power of the devil the said N., to the destruction of his flesh, straitly charging all that profess the Lord Jesus, to whose knowledge this our sentence shall come, to repute and hold the said N. accursed, and unworthy of the familiar society of Christians: declaring unto all men, that such as hereafter before his repentance shall haunt or familiarly accompany with him, are partakers of his impiety, and subject to the like condemnation. This our sentence, O Lord Jesus, pronounced in thy name, and at thy commandment, we humbly desire thee to ratify according to thy promise. And yet, Lord, thou that camest to save that which was lost, look upon him with the eyes of thy mercy, if thy good pleasure be; and so pierce thou his heart that he may feel in his breast the terrors of thy judgments, that by thy grace he fruitfully may be converted to thee; and so damning his own impiety, he may be with like solemnity received within the bosom of thy church, from the which this day (with grief and dolour of our hearts) he is ejected.*

Whilst the excommunicate is considered “accursed”, the language of cursing is employed as a synonym for the wretchedness of the one who has been ejected from the church.

<sup>241</sup> Cf. part 3.4.2.3.

<sup>242</sup> See part two for a general discussion of cursing and magic.

Excommunication differs from anathema in this, that *the latter completely excluding pardon, dooms and devotes the individual to eternal destruction*, whereas the former rather rebukes and animadverts upon his manners; and although it also punishes, it is to bring him to salvation, by forewarning him of his future doom. If it succeeds, reconciliation and restoration to communion are ready to be given. Moreover, anathema is rarely if ever to be used.<sup>243</sup>

Calvin's concern to interpret παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ in relation to the wider context of verse 5 is commendable.<sup>244</sup> However, his comparison of verse 5 with 2 Corinthians 2 is more problematic. Firstly, it assumes that the same errant Corinthian features in both passages: an assumption largely rejected by modern scholars. Moreover, whilst death is precluded in 2 Corinthians 2, some form of physical punishment remains a possibility, for the nature of the punishment is not defined: Paul simply states "For such a one this punishment by the majority is enough."<sup>245</sup>

Calvin's desire to interpret the verse in terms of excommunication alone is explicable when his writings are considered within their historical context.<sup>246</sup> On the one hand, Calvin struggled against the Anabaptists, who rejected not only church discipline, but all forms of State authority. On the other hand, he accused the Roman church of "usurpation of temporal function to the ecclesiastical sphere."<sup>247</sup> Whilst affirming civil authority, he claimed for the church, as opposed to the Council, the right to administer excommunication.<sup>248</sup> Thus, in opposition to the Roman church, he argues that Paul does not act unilaterally: he doesn't "excommunicate according to his own pleasure" for the authority to excommunicate "does not belong to any one individual."<sup>249</sup> Rather, it is

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<sup>243</sup> *Institutes*, 4:12:10 (emphasis added).

<sup>244</sup> We have already noted (in part 1.1) the weakness of some curse readings due to their isolation of verse 5 (or, worse, parts of verse 5) from its textual location.

<sup>245</sup> 2 Corinthians 2:6.

<sup>246</sup> Battles has persuasively shown that it is not only Pauline thought that significantly shapes Calvin's writing, but also the Roman philosopher Seneca and the Stoic tradition: "The evidence demonstrates a continuing influence of Seneca and the Stoic tradition in Calvin's ethical teaching and moral discipline of the city" (See F. L. Battles, *Interpreting John Calvin*, [R. Benedetto (ed.), Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 1996], 113).

<sup>247</sup> Battles, *Calvin*, 113. Speaking of excommunication, Calvin claims that "a filthy profanation of this holy discipline prevails in the papacy today".

<sup>248</sup> In particular, Calvin maintained that the church should exercise discipline (with the potential for excommunication) in the regulation of the Lord's Supper. See *Institutes* 4:12:6.

<sup>249</sup> Calvin, *Corinthians*, 185.



to be “transacted by common authority.”<sup>250</sup>

Contrary to the Anabaptists, discipline is crucial to society, family, and church. Discipline keeps the church in its rightful ‘ordered’ state. Those who seek the “abolition” of church discipline (of which excommunication is a part) “certainly aim at the complete devastation of the Church”,<sup>251</sup> for,

The collapse of the Church would surely follow unless the preaching of doctrine was supported by private admonitions, corrections, and other aids of the sort that sustain doctrine and do not let it remain idle.<sup>252</sup>

In retrospect, a struggle to re-establish a ‘biblical’ practice of excommunication sets Calvin on course for a struggle against the Anabaptists, the Roman church, and the Genevan Council. It is this struggle which seasons Calvin’s interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5,<sup>253</sup> his contemporary concerns affecting his reading.

#### 1.2.3.2 G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (1987)<sup>254</sup>

Fee’s 1987 exegetical commentary is described by the *Journal of Biblical Literature* as “the most thorough interpretation of 1 Corinthians to have appeared in English in this generation”.<sup>255</sup> Significantly, as we will see, Fee’s influential work concludes in favour of a reading of 1 Corinthians 5:5 in terms of exclusion alone.

Moreover, Fee makes several key criticisms of curse readings of παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός. Firstly, he argues that advocates of a curse interpretation of verse five wrongly interpret παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ

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<sup>250</sup> Calvin, *Corinthians*, 185.

<sup>251</sup> *Institutes*, 4:12:1.

<sup>252</sup> *Institutes* 4:22:1.

<sup>253</sup> Cf. Tertullian (part 1.1.1).

<sup>254</sup> Fee’s popular work (G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [The New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1987]) was reprinted in 1993.

<sup>255</sup> Front inside cover of Fee’s commentary.

σατανᾶ by drawing false parallels with extra-Pauline material.<sup>256</sup> For example, contrary to Conzelmann and Brun<sup>257</sup> (whom he footnotes), Fee states:

Those who see this [παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾶ] as a kind of “curse” formula are probably more enamoured with ancient parallels than such a phrase actually warrants.<sup>258</sup>

Ironically, like many scholars who argue in favour of a curse interpretation of the verse, Fee fails to clearly define his use of the equivocal term ‘parallel’—thereby substantially weakening his criticism. For example, without discussion, he states that the “parallels adduced by A. Yarbro Collins...from the magical papyri are *not in fact parallel*, despite A. Deissmann’s assertion to the contrary”.<sup>259</sup> Elsewhere, Fee accepts the existence of “remote parallels” within the “magical papyri”:

Apart from the similar usage in 1 Tim. 1:20, the language “to hand over to Satan” is not found elsewhere as an act of expulsion from a religious community. There are some *remote parallels* in the magical papyri but these are personal execrations spoken directly to the god of the underworld.<sup>260</sup>

Fee considers the magical papyri to be of less relevance to verse 5 than the biblical text 1 Timothy 1:20 (οὗς παρέδωκα τῷ σατανᾶ), for in spite of the linguistic resonances between the magical papyri and 1 Corinthians 5, there is no contextual agreement.<sup>261</sup> In contrast, Fee maintains (*contra* Yarbro Collins) that 1 Timothy 1:20 is both linguistically and contextually relevant to παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾶ in verse 5.<sup>262</sup>

<sup>256</sup> Fee, *Corinthians*, 208.

<sup>257</sup> Fee, *Corinthians*, 208 n. 57.

<sup>258</sup> Fee, *Corinthians*, 208.

<sup>259</sup> Fee, *Corinthians*, 206 n. 46 (emphasis added). Gundry Volf, who argues against a curse interpretation of verse 5, makes a similar error in arguing that a “material parallel” between Job 2:6 and παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾶ is “doubtful.” No explanation of her phrase “material parallel” is given (J. M. Gundry Volf, *Paul and Perseverance: Staying In and Falling Away* [Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament: Reihe 2; 37; J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1990], 117-118, n. 83).

<sup>260</sup> Fee offers his own translation of the *LMP*: “Demon of the dead,...I hand over to you (παραδίδωμι) so-and-so [the name is missing], in order that...” (Fee, *Corinthians*, 208 n. 61 drawing upon Deissmann, *Light*, 302).

<sup>261</sup> For a fuller consideration of 1 Timothy 1:20, see part 3.4.2.1.

<sup>262</sup> Fee’s argument is adopted by Gundry Volf in her interpretation of παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾶ (Gundry Volf, *Paul*, 117-118, n. 83). Gundry Volf argues that the errant



But whatever the source of the language, the similar usage in 1 Tim. 1:20 suggests that for Paul this was *quasitechnical language for some kind of expulsion from the Christian community*, probably from the gatherings of the assembly for worship, including the meals and supper in honor of the Lord (see on v. 11). Thus we are not dealing with an “execration” formula, nor is it probable that Paul intends the language to be taken literally, in the sense of personally handing the man to Satan to “go to work on him,” as it were.<sup>263</sup>

However, there are a number of difficulties with Fee’s use of 1 Timothy 1:20 as an intertext for verse 5 (which we will briefly consider here).<sup>264</sup> Firstly, Fee assumes that 1 Timothy accurately reflects Paul’s thought. Whilst pseudonymous, and therefore written in the style of Paul’s epistles, the author of 1 Timothy was, like us, an interpreter of Paul’s writings. As such, he is as open to the same interpretative misunderstandings as we are.<sup>265</sup>

Secondly, *contra* Fee, there is nothing to indicate that 1 Timothy 1:20 refers to “an act of expulsion from a religious community”.<sup>266</sup> All that can reliably be said about this passage is that Hymenaeus and Alexander were “handed to Satan” (οὓς παρέδωκα τῷ σατανᾷ) for the purpose of learning not to blaspheme. Exclusion alone may have been the means of ensuring this outcome. Alternatively, exclusion and curse—including some form of physical suffering (and possibly even death)—may have been intended. Again, the author of 1 Timothy may have understood the Pauline phrase παραδοῦναι

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Corinthian is an unbeliever, as is confirmed by “the fact that he belonged to this other sphere [the sphere of Satan]” (Gundry Volf, *Paul* 118). Her concern appears to be theologically motivated: how could the errant Corinthian be saved without repenting of his sin? “If Paul considers the offender not to be a genuine Christian, as I have argued that the rest of chap. 5 reveals, his final salvation is unthinkable apart from repentance and conversion” (Gundry Volf, *Paul*, 119).

<sup>263</sup> Fee, *Corinthians*, 208-209 (emphasis added). Note, in direct contrast to Yarbrow Collins who, following Deissmann, claimed that παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ was technical magical terminology, Fee argues that this phrase is “quasitechnical language” for expulsion (Fee, *Corinthians*, 208). As previously, Gundry Volf follows Fee (Gundry Volf, *Paul*, 117-118 n. 83).

<sup>264</sup> For a full discussion of this passage, cf. part 3.4.2.1.

<sup>265</sup> Fee’s defence of the consideration of 1 Timothy 1:20 as Pauline is, therefore, in error: “Remarkably, some scholars would eliminate this text [1 Timothy 1:20] as having relevance because they think Paul did not write the Pastoral Epistles, yet will allow that the remotest of parallels from pagan literature influenced him (e.g., Yarbrow Collins, “Function”). But the Pastorals are Pauline even if he didn’t write them; here then is relevant usage of the most important kind” (Fee, *Corinthians*, 208 n. 62). Fee’s comments hint at another issue within his treatment of the curse reading of verse 5, namely that he is not prepared to countenance the idea of the Apostle Paul being ‘influenced’ by ‘pagan literature’.

<sup>266</sup> Fee, *Corinthians*, 208-209.

τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ to refer to a curse alone.<sup>267</sup> Furthermore, the use of the term ‘learn’ (παιδεύω) leaves open the possibility of physical suffering as a tool to teach Hymenaeus and Alexander to change their errant ways.<sup>268</sup>

Having dismissed a curse interpretation of verse 5, Fee concludes that παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ is a call to exclusion: specifically, the errant Corinthian is to be delivered to Satan’s sphere.<sup>269</sup> Similarly, Hays rejects a curse interpretation of παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ in favour of interpreting these words as a “metaphor” for exclusion:

Probably Paul did not expect the community to perform a ceremony explicitly cursing the man; rather, delivering him to Satan is a vivid metaphor for the *effect* of expulsion [*sic*] from the church.<sup>270</sup>

However, whilst παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ is indisputably metaphorical, the question remains as to the nature of this metaphor. It could be argued that within Paul’s supernatural worldview, it would be erroneous to understand Satan within this context as a synonym for exclusion, albeit a “vivid metaphor”.

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<sup>267</sup> Fee’s talk of probability is misplaced: “Thus we are not dealing with an ‘execration’ formula, nor is it *probable* that Paul intends the language to be taken literally, in the sense of personally handing the man to Satan to ‘go to work on him,’ as it were. More likely, the language means to turn him back out into Satan’s sphere” (Fee, *Corinthians*, 209 [emphasis added]).

<sup>268</sup> Yarbrow Collins (“Function”, 258) interprets Timothy’s use of παιδεύω in the light of the Magical Papyri and *LSJ*: “The recalcitrant opponents are to be consigned to a demonic power which will prevent them from doing a type of deed. *Paideuō* apparently has the sense “chastise, punish” here, rather than “instruct” or “educate.” Given the potential for euphemism in the use of learn in this context, Yarbrow Collins argument is plausible (one need only think of the contemporary English euphemism ‘to teach somebody a lesson’, which may be wholly destructive).

<sup>269</sup> Fee’s discussion continues (pp. 209-214) with two questions related to the phrase εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός: “(1) What does ‘flesh’ mean in the phrase ‘for the destruction of the flesh’? and (2) what is the nature of the contrast between ‘flesh’ and ‘spirit’?” (Fee, *Corinthians*, 209). Fee argues that ὄλεθρος does not entail the physical death of the ‘flesh’, but rather the ‘remedial’ “destruction of what was ‘carnal’ in him”: the errant Corinthian is to be re-orientated toward God (Fee, *Corinthians*, 212).

Although Fee makes little mention of cursing in relation to his discussion of εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός (like scholars such as Deissmann, Fee deals with cursing in relation to the phrase παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ), it is likely that Fee would maintain that his rejection of an understanding of ὄλεθρος as ‘death’ automatically discounts a curse interpretation of this passage (as, like South, Fee understands a curse reading to require the interpretation of ὄλεθρος as ‘death’). We will consider Fee’s interpretation of εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός in greater detail in part three.

<sup>270</sup> R. B. Hays, *First Corinthians* [Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching; Louisville, John Knox Press, 1997], 85 (Hays’ emphasis).



### 1.2.3.3 J. T. South, *Disciplinary Practices in Pauline Texts* (1992); “A Critique of the ‘Curse/Death’ Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5:1-8” (1993)<sup>271</sup>

South’s reading of 1 Corinthians 5 has proved increasingly influential over the past decade. In particular, his extensive argumentation for a non-curse, non-magical,<sup>272</sup> reading of 1 Corinthians 5 has persuaded many scholars (such as Thiselton<sup>273</sup> and Garland<sup>274</sup>). South offers eight principal criticisms of the “curse/death” interpretation,<sup>275</sup> the most pertinent of which we will consider in this section.<sup>276</sup>

At the outset of his critique, South grapples with some of the heavyweights of a curse or magic interpretation of Paul’s hand over phraseology: Deissmann, Conzelmann, and Yarbrow Collins.<sup>277</sup> In particular, he argues that “*Greek and Jewish curse formulae are not genuine parallels to 1 Cor 5:5*”.<sup>278</sup> Like Fee, South’s initial criticism concerns the nature of parallel material. For example, South rejects the supposed parallels between verse 5 and the Greek Magical Papyri (*GMP* 4:1247; 5:70-95, 174-180, 185-210), because: “in *none* of these is the offender handed over *to Satan*”:<sup>279</sup>

In *PGM* IV. 1247 it is a demon who is handed over, not a person. And in *PGM* [*sic*] V. 70-95, 174-180, and 185-210, the supplicant delivers no one but rather calls upon various deities to hand over an enemy to the person casting the spell, i. e., to the supplicant him/herself. So it is quite the reverse of the situation described in 1 Cor 5:5. This makes

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<sup>271</sup> J. T. South, “A Critique of the ‘Curse/Death’ Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5.1-8”, *New Testament Studies* 39 (1993), 539-561.

<sup>272</sup> South also rejects a ‘magical’ interpretation of ἀνάθεμα in Galatians 1:8-9 and 1 Corinthians 16:22 (South, *Disciplinary*, 126).

<sup>273</sup> Cf. part 1.2.3.4.

<sup>274</sup> Cf. part 1.2.3.5.

<sup>275</sup> South employs the phrase “curse/death” to denote an interpretation of verse 5 in which Paul ‘enjoins’ “the pronouncement of a curse upon the offender with the expectation that he will die as a result” (South, *Disciplinary*, 38). As we have noted, it is possible to argue for a curse reading of verse 5 *without* understanding death as a result of the curse. As such, South’s foundational assumption (that a curse interpretation is necessarily a “curse/death” interpretation) is fundamentally flawed.

<sup>276</sup> South, *Disciplinary*, 43-65.

<sup>277</sup> South, *Disciplinary*, 44. Initially, South (*Disciplinary*, 38-43) summarises the arguments in favour of the “curse/death” interpretation in a five-page summary, which is peppered with other familiar proponents of a curse reading of verse 5, such as Tertullian, Dobschütz, and Forkman.

<sup>278</sup> South, *Disciplinary*, 44 (South’s emphasis).

<sup>279</sup> See our examination of Deissmann’s, Conzelmann’s, and Yarbrow Collins’ arguments in 1.1 for a more detailed discussion of these references (South, *Disciplinary*, 44 [South’s emphasis]).

Collins' assertion that παραδίδωμι [sic] was a technical term for handing over offenders to supernatural powers questionable at best.<sup>280</sup>

The absence of the Judeo-Christian figure of Satan from *GMP* is hardly surprising.<sup>281</sup> Furthermore, the presence of a demon (or, better, daemon) in lieu of a human (in *GMP* 4:1247) is of little concern, unless one were to define "parallel" in terms of identical phraseology—similar to the manner in which Fee understands a "parallel". South also rejects the relevance of *GMP* on the basis that it contains spells that "are not intended for use by communities seeking to discipline deviant members."<sup>282</sup> However, in the same way in which one could individualise Paul's words in verse 5 as, for example, part of a curse, the formulae of *GMP* could be easily employed in a communal context.

South's following criticism, which he considers "more damaging" than his previous one, concerns the dating of *GMP*:

Most of them [the formulae] date from the second century B. C. to the fifth century A. D. But the examples cited by Deissman [sic], Conzelmann, and Collins in which παραδίδωμι [sic] (occurs (*PGM* IV AND V) [sic] come from approximately the fourth to fifth centuries A.D. This puts them so far after Paul's time as to make it highly conjectural that similar formulae using similar terminology could have had any influence on his thought.<sup>283</sup>

Whilst South is technically correct concerning the dating of *GMP*, his interpretation of this information is seriously awry. As we will show in part 2.4, the *GMP* contains formulae of considerable antiquity (agedness, of course, allows magical conventions to become established).<sup>284</sup> Furthermore, we will demonstrate the existence of a common

<sup>280</sup> South, *Disciplinary*, 44.

<sup>281</sup> See part 2.4 for a fuller discussion of the *GMP*.

<sup>282</sup> South, *Disciplinary*, 44.

<sup>283</sup> South, *Disciplinary*, 44-45.

<sup>284</sup> On the basis of South's interpretation of the dating of *GMP*, in his 1993 article, South argues that "It is more likely that παραδίδωμι found its way into the Greek magical tradition as a result of Paul's use of it in 1 Cor 5.5, understood as some sort of imprecatory formula, than the reverse" (South, "Critique", 546). This constitutes a significant *volte-face* from his 1992 work: "It is not inconceivable [sic], though it hardly seems likely, that παραδίδωμι [sic] found its way into the Greek magical tradition as a result of Paul's use of it in 1 Cor 5:5 in what might have been understood in ancient times as some sort of imprecatory formula" (South, *Disciplinary*, 45).

Thus, in his most recent work, South inadvertently affirms a relationship between Paul's words and *GMP*. Moreover, South also affirms that Paul's 'hand over' phraseology could have been understood in terms of cursing in "ancient times". Commenting on Job 2:6, South claims that "*The probable origin of παραδοῦναι τῷ σατανᾷ argues against the curse/death interpretation.*" South notes that in Job 2:6



language of cursing which spans centuries. As such, no alleged anachronism exists: South's "more damaging" criticism is in actuality innocuous. Nonetheless, South's dismissal of the *GMP* is instructive, for it demonstrates the failure of advocates of the curse interpretation, and in particular Deissmann, Conzelmann, and Yarbrow Collins, to articulate properly the supposed relationship between verse 5 and their extra-biblical material.<sup>285</sup>

Having made an unconvincing attempt to invalidate the use of the *GMP* in support of curse/death interpretations, South seeks to discredit any "parallel" drawn between the curse phraseology in the Dead Sea Scrolls, *birkat ha-minim*, and verse 5.<sup>286</sup> Whilst South notes favourably that the Qumran literature is "communal" material, he argues that "nowhere in these texts is there a delivering of anyone to Satan."<sup>287</sup> Once again, South fails to outline positively his criteria for assessing the relationship between παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ and non-Pauline material. Instead, he concludes his assessment of the use of Jewish and Greek curse material in the interpretation of verse 5 as follows:

what has traditionally been accepted as hard evidence in support of the curse/death view turns out not to be so at all...There is no doubt that in citing the ancient curse formulae "certain factors" have been overlooked, and it is unfortunate that so little real evidence has been allowed to carry so much weight without closer examination. This is but one of many instances in which the over-zealous application of religio-historical evidence has led to a highly questionable interpretation of a NT text.<sup>288</sup>

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Satan is denied taking Job's life. In this context, he argues: "If this [Job 2:6] is the source of Paul's language, it would be highly irregular for him to give it exactly the opposite meaning, as the curse/death interpretation requires...Of course it is possible that Paul is using the language of Job 2:6 in a sense different from its original context, but it would be necessary to show how such a usage arose for Paul, and this the advocates of the curse/death interpretation cannot do" (South, *Disciplinary*, 52). Likewise, South fails to explain not only how an alternative usage of Paul's 'hand over' phraseology arose in *GMP*, but how it gained the "opposite meaning" to Paul's usage.

<sup>285</sup> For example, South notes that: "The assumption, then [in Yarbrow Collins' argument], is that Paul (either directly or indirectly) borrowed his terminology from this background, Christianized it and deployed it in the context of corrective church discipline" (South, *Disciplinary*, 39-40). As we noted in our treatment of Dobschütz, any consideration of Paul that presents him as one who stands outwith his cultural context is seriously flawed.

<sup>286</sup> At this stage, we are merely interested to highlight the difficulties with South's methodology. We will examine the Dead Sea Scrolls in part 2.3.

<sup>287</sup> South, *Disciplinary*, 45.

<sup>288</sup> South, *Disciplinary*, 45-46.

With this confidence, the second pillar of South's critique discounts Acts 5:1-11 and 1 Corinthians 11:30 as non-"genuine parallels" to verse 5:<sup>289</sup>

The similarity extends only to the fact that in both texts, people receive capital punishment for spiritual offences. But conspicuously absent is any hint of a curse or a solemn act of the assembled church.<sup>290</sup>

As before, the issue of what constitutes a "parallel" is primary. Whilst there are, undoubtedly, differences between these texts, this does not preclude a more general intertextual resonance. However, South affirms one "true verbal parallel" to 1 Corinthians 5:5; namely 1 Timothy 1:20,<sup>291</sup> although he argues that the concept of death is "excluded". As South combines cursing and death, cursing must—by implication—also be rejected. South's confidence is misplaced. As we argued in our discussion of Fee, 1 Timothy 1:20 does not preclude either curse or death for Hymenaeus or Alexander, whose "faith" is 'shipwrecked'.<sup>292</sup> In fact, the context of blasphemy may well befit such a punitive response.<sup>293</sup>

Rather than advocating any form of curse interpretation, South argues that 1 Corinthians 5 should be understood as a call to expel the Corinthian πόρνος:

there is a more satisfactory explanation of 1 Cor 5:5 than the curse/death interpretation, namely, that by παραδοῦναι τῷ σατανᾷ Paul referred not to the offender's sudden physical demise under the power of a curse, but rather to his exclusion from the fellowship of the Christian community. According to this understanding of the text, delivering the man to Satan meant putting him outside the sphere of God's protection within the church and leaving him exposed to the Satanic forces of evil in hopes that the experience would cause him to repent and return to the fellowship of the church. The "flesh" to be destroyed is thus not his physical body but his fleshly lusts. By putting the flesh to death (Rom 8:13, Gal 5:24, Col 3:5), the offender's spirit would be saved "in the day of the Lord."<sup>294</sup>

There are many familiar elements in this non-curse reading of παραδοῦναι τὸν

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<sup>289</sup> South, *Disciplinary*, 47.

<sup>290</sup> South, *Disciplinary*, 47.

<sup>291</sup> South, *Disciplinary*, 52.

<sup>292</sup> 1 Timothy 1:19.

<sup>293</sup> Cf. Matthew (12:31), who states that a form of blasphemy is unforgivable (i.e., blasphemy against the Spirit).

<sup>294</sup> South, *Disciplinary*, 43.



τοιούτον τῷ σατανᾷ. For example, the understanding of Paul's hand over phraseology in terms of "spheres", the expectation of the man's "repentance" and restoration (by interpreting 1 Corinthians 5 in relation to 2 Corinthians 2<sup>295</sup>), and the non-physical interpretation of σάρξ in terms of "fleshly lusts."<sup>296</sup>

We have already noted a major weakness in South's argument: the failure to outline clearly his criteria for relating material—or "parallels"—to 1 Corinthians 5:5. It could be argued that his argument is further weakened by his theological commitment to the appropriation of Pauline "disciplinary practices" in a modern church environment.<sup>297</sup> South's work, concerning discipline in early Christianity, is not just for the scholar but for *application* in the church—for God "disciplines those whom He loves":<sup>298</sup>

It is my utmost desire that *this work be found useful*, not only to scholars of early Christianity, *but to all those who serve Him who "disciplines those whom He loves"* (Ps 94:12, Heb 12:6).<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> Cf. Fee (whose work predates South's) whose conclusions concerning verse 5 are broadly similar to South's. However, unlike South, Fee denies that the errant Corinthian in 2 Corinthians 2 is the same individual as the one in 1 Corinthians 5 (Fee, *Corinthians*, 212).

In the light of 2 Corinthians 2, South argues that "the offender was restored to full participation in both cultic and social activities...because of his positive response to their action, both he and they benefited in the end. He regained his place in the community, and the community regained a brother-member (assuming that they forgave him as instructed)" (South, *Disciplinary*, 105).

<sup>296</sup> South, *Disciplinary*, 43.

<sup>297</sup> More recently, May's study of 1 Corinthians 5-7, which advocates an exclusion-only reading, is concerned with the contemporary issues concerning "sex and Christianity" (A. S. May, *The Body for the Lord: Sex and Identity in 1 Corinthians 5-7*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 278, M. Goodacre (ed.), T & T Clark, 2004, preface). Like South, there are indications in May's work of a seamless thread between early, and contemporary, Christianity (which is presented in a homogenised manner). This is reflected in May's smooth transition from "what is" (note, the present tense), to what *ought to be*:

*What is* the relationship between Christian belonging and Christian ethics? *What are to be* the attitudes of Christians to marriage, singleness and forbidden sexual behaviour? *What does the* [in this context, the contemporary] *Church do* when individuals do not conform to sexual norms? Do (and, if so, how do) Christian ethics differ from those of non-Christians? Standing behind these questions are questions about the relationship between the Church and the social and moral environment in which it finds itself (May, *Body*, preface).

To May's credit, he does note that "it would be futile to pretend that these questions would command the same interest if they were not questions that the twenty-first century Church is urgently asking itself today" (May, *Body*, preface).

<sup>298</sup> As a part of his interpretation of verse 5, Blomberg offers advice to congregations on how to avoid litigation in the application of discipline (C. Blomberg, *1 Corinthians: The NIV Application Commentary: From Biblical Text...to Contemporary Life* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995], 112). See also Fisk who rejects a curse interpretation of verse 5, whilst affirming expulsion and its contemporary application (B. N. Fisk, *First Corinthians: Interpretation Bible Studies* [Louisville: Geneva Press, 2000], 26, 30-32).

<sup>299</sup> South, *Disciplinary*, viii (emphasis added).

It is not unreasonable to suggest that such a clear emphasis on application (coupled with a commitment to the primacy of the early church) precludes interpreting παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ in terms of curse and death: for to most, it is unpalatable to think of contemporary church discipline as involving the cursing and death of the sinner.

#### 1.2.3.4 A. C. Thiselton, *First Epistle* (2000)

Thiselton's interpretation of verse 5 is particularly indebted to South, whose exegesis he commends. Like South, Thiselton rejects the idea that verse 5 is "a kind of 'curse' sentence"" akin to the curse against Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 (strikingly, he does not question the interpretation of the Ananias and Sapphira account in the light of cursing, even though the language of cursing does not feature in Acts 5:1-12).<sup>300</sup> In general, Thiselton bestows unbridled praise upon South for his "admirable and convincing critique of the 'curse/death' interpretation".<sup>301</sup>

Like many others, Thiselton accepts without question the association of a curse interpretation with death (as the consequence of the curse). On this basis, he implies that Rosner's work negates the presence of a curse in verse 5: "Rosner's work on the OT background confirms the notion of exposure to punishment rather than to *death*."<sup>302</sup> Of course, as we have noted, this does not necessarily negate the possibility of a curse act for it is possible to conceive of a curse leading to other forms of physical suffering

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<sup>300</sup> Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 395.

<sup>301</sup> Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 397. Likewise, South ("Critique", 552) is persuaded by Thiselton's earlier article on σάρξ and πνεῦμα ("The Meaning of Σάρξ in 1 Cor. 5:5. A Fresh Approach in the Light of Logical and Semantic Factors", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 26 [1973], 204-228). Rather than conduct a detailed rebuttal of the 'curse/death' interpretation, he points his readers towards South's works, demonstrating his confidence in South's reading of this passage.

<sup>302</sup> Earlier in his discussion of verse one, Thiselton acknowledges that Deuteronomy 27 provides one (not necessarily the only) important and intelligible background to Paul's judicial and executive language in 5:3-5" (*First Epistle*, 386).



rather than death—the ultimate form of physical decay. Interestingly, Thiselton does not completely rule out the possibility of physical suffering, even though he resists an interpretation of σάρξ in terms of the errant Corinthian man’s physical body:

What is to be destroyed is arguably not primarily the physical body of the offender (although this may or may not be secondarily entailed) but the “fleshly” *stance of self-sufficiency* of which Paul accuses *primarily the community* but surely *also the man*.<sup>303</sup>

Thiselton dismisses the relevance of the *Greek Magical Papyri* in a sentence: “None of the Greek ‘magical’ curse formulae cited by Deissmann, Yarbrow Collins, and Conzelmann relate to ‘handing over to Satan’.”<sup>304</sup> Whilst Thiselton does not unpack this statement, we will assume that, for him, the absence of a reference to Satan in the *Greek Magical Papyri* invalidates the applicability of this material to verse 5.<sup>305</sup> Other scholars echo this sentiment in their wider discussion of what constitutes an appropriate parallel to verse 5. It is sufficient for us to note: that this question demands a more extended discussion than Thiselton provided; that the applicability of the *Greek Magical Papyri* in relation to verse 5 does not rely upon the presence or absence of Satan.

Drawing upon previous work,<sup>306</sup> Thiselton seeks to rebut the arguments of older exegetes who maintain that blessings and curses are magical words containing “*causal force*”.<sup>307</sup> In particular, Thiselton disputes Käsemann’s understanding of verse 5 as a “sentence of Holy Law”.<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 396.

<sup>304</sup> Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 398.

<sup>305</sup> As we will see in part two, the language of handing over features not only in the *GMP*, but in many other media in the Ancient World.

<sup>306</sup> A. C. Thiselton, “The Supposed Power of Words in the Biblical Writings”, *Journal of Theological Studies* 25 (1974), 283-299.

<sup>307</sup> Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 399. We will explore this view further in part two.

<sup>308</sup> Käsemann equates παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ with “exclusion”. However, his wider interpretation of verse 5 envisages death, although neither curse nor magic enables the errant Corinthians’ demise (E. Käsemann, “Sentences of Holy Law in the New Testament”, *New Testament Questions of Today* [trans. W. J. Montague; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969], 71).

Following many scholars who espouse a non-curse interpretation of verse 5, Thiselton envisages the expulsion of the errant Corinthian from the community. Quoting from South (who follows Calvin), Thiselton argues that the man is to be removed from the “sphere of God’s protection” and is to be “exposed to the satanic forces of evil”. This act is salvific—for the community as well as the individual—and entails the destruction of the σάρξ—the sinful aspect of the man, not primarily his physical body:<sup>309</sup>

What Paul hopes will be destroyed is his attitude of self-congratulation, which deprivation from the respect and support of the church is likely to bring about...Presumably that aspect of σάρξ which includes an illicit sexual stance will also be included in this process of *destruction*. In order to foreclose as little semantic flexibility as possible, we have translated the *destruction of the fleshly*.<sup>310</sup>

Thiselton’s reading is broadly sociological and psychological in its understanding of the consequences of expulsion for the errant Corinthian:

If consigning to Satan means excluding him from the community, this spells the end of self-congratulation about their association with such a distinguished patron; while for the offender himself sudden removal from a platform of adulation to total isolation from the community would have a sobering if not devastating effect.<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>309</sup> Thiselton is not as categorical as other scholars concerning the absence of physical suffering from the man’s punishment: “I concluded in 1973 that ‘the punishment of the offender *may or may not* have included physical suffering in its outworking,’ but that what is to be destroyed is the ‘self-glorying or self-satisfaction’ of the offender and perhaps also the community” (Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 396 referring to Thiselton, “Meaning”, 225-226). Again: “What is to be destroyed is arguably not primarily the physical body of the offender (although this may or may not be secondarily entailed)” (Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 396).

Clearly, Thiselton’s equivocation at this point makes it difficult to categorise his argument. Although, strictly speaking, Thiselton’s argument should be located in a separate category, rather than create an additional category I have chosen to locate him with those scholars who do not envisage physical suffering as the possibility of physical suffering does not feature in Thiselton’s interpretation of this passage—it simply remains a inconsequential possibility he does not rule out. Gundry Volf (*Paul*, 118-119) is similarly non-committal concerning the interpretation of εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός: “Paul’s language does not exclude a Satanic attack on the man, but neither does it demand one...it is impossible to say with certainty which consequence of expulsion from the church, Paul hopes, will spur the sinner on to spiritual transformation”.

<sup>310</sup> Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 399-400.

<sup>311</sup> Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 396.



As death is not in view, the possibility of the man's future re-admittance to the community remains a possibility following "[his] change of heart" (Thiselton's argument explicitly follows Gundry-Volf's at this juncture).<sup>312</sup> Thiselton's interpretation demonstrates the confidence of those scholars who advocate exclusion-only readings of verse 5. Furthermore, he highlights the continued influence of South's monograph in the rejection of curse readings of this passage.

### 1.2.3.5 D. E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (2003)

Garland's recent treatment of 1 Corinthians 5:5 signals the continued interpretative move against a curse interpretation of this passage. Following South's lead, Garland offers a five-fold critique of "the curse/death interpretation".<sup>313</sup>

Initially, taking 1 Thessalonians 5:23 as his intertext,<sup>314</sup> Garland argues that Paul "does not think that one part of a person will be destroyed and another part saved."<sup>315</sup> As such, the curse/death reading is invalidated for it argues, contrary to Paul's unitary anthropology, that the errant Corinthian's σάρξ (which is understood as the physical body) is destroyed to ensure the salvation of his πνεῦμα.<sup>316</sup>

Surprisingly, Garland undermines his own argument by noting without comment that Gundry "makes a strong case for anthropological duality and the disjunction of flesh

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<sup>312</sup> Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 399.

<sup>313</sup> D. E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 169.

<sup>314</sup> Cf. Shillington, who selects the atonement text, Leviticus 16, as his intertext (V. G. Shillington, "Atonement Texture in 1 Corinthians 5.5", *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 71 [1998], 29-50). By contrast, Rosner interprets verse 5 in the light of Paul's discussion of the temple in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 (Rosner, "Temple", 137-145).

<sup>315</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 170.

<sup>316</sup> Note that the term σάρξ does not feature in 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

and spirit at death.”<sup>317</sup> In actuality, considerable disagreement surrounds the interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 5:23.<sup>318</sup> Best rightly highlights the difficulty of using this liturgical text as a means of determining Paul’s anthropology,<sup>319</sup> whilst Bruce clearly demonstrates the flaw in interpreting πνεῦμα, ψυχή, and σῶμα in a tripartite manner.<sup>320</sup>

Garland’s second critique of the ‘curse/death’ interpretation is a familiar criticism: the material considered by Deissmann, Forkman, Conzelmann, and Yarbrow Collins to be parallel material is in fact not a “genuine parallel”.<sup>321</sup> Like the scholars he criticises, Garland fails to indicate what constitutes a “genuine parallel”. Instead, he recycles South’s arguments without refinement, exposing his confidence that South has successfully rendered consideration of extra-Pauline curse material irrelevant to the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5:5.<sup>322</sup>

The magical papyri, along with the texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls, are not relevant. In spotting parallels to the NT in the scrolls, scholars frequently tend to ignore that the community that generated these documents was a closed one and strictly forbade the dissemination of their teaching (IQS 9:16-17). It is unlikely that Paul knew these texts firsthand, let alone was influenced by them.<sup>323</sup>

Garland curiously assumes that the practices, values, and beliefs of the community who produced the Dead Sea Scrolls were culturally unique. In actuality, common cultural features (e.g., asceticism, purity rituals, and cursing<sup>324</sup>) existed between the community

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<sup>317</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 170 n. 31.

<sup>318</sup> Cf. R. F. Collins, *Studies on the First Letter to the Thessalonians* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologiarum Lovaniensium 66; Leuven, Uitgeverij Peeters, 1984), 68-69.

<sup>319</sup> E. Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Black’s New Testament Commentaries; London, A & C Black, 1986), 244.

<sup>320</sup> F. F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Word Biblical Commentary 45; Waco, Word Books, 1982), 130.

<sup>321</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 171.

<sup>322</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 171.

<sup>323</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 171.

<sup>324</sup> See part 2.3 for a more detailed consideration of the Cursing in the Dead Sea Scrolls.



of the Dead Sea Scrolls and other first century Palestinian groups. As such, it would not be surprising to find similar cultural practices in evidence in Paul's letters and other first-century documents. Garland is mistaken in his assumption that literary dependence is required in order for cultural elements of the Dead Sea Scrolls to share any commonality with Paul's writings. In other words, a commonality can exist between Paul's letters and the Dead Sea Scrolls without requiring that Paul was influenced by this or any other such document.<sup>325</sup>

When referring to Old Testament intertexts to 1 Corinthians 5:5, Garland no longer speaks of "parallels" but of "Scriptural echoes".<sup>326</sup> One wonders if Garland would have more readily accepted the relevance of extra-Pauline curse texts if the language of "parallels" had been exchanged with that of "echoes"?

Thirdly, Garland rejects the accounts of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) and the misappropriation of the Eucharist (1 Corinthians 11:30) as intertexts for verse 5 on the basis that: the action was not communal; expulsion and deliverance to Satan does not feature; salvation is not the intended outcome.<sup>327</sup> Rather than questioning the relevance of these two potential intertexts, Garland's assessment returns us to the issue as to how one determines the appropriate use of intertexts (as part of an historical study). We will explore this question in greater depth—specifically in relation to 1 Corinthians 11:30—in parts two and three. Furthermore, Garland's criticism highlights the failure of various curse interpretations to justify their use of Acts 5:1-11 and 1 Corinthians 11:30 as intertexts with 1 Corinthians 5:5.

Garland's fourth criticism of the 'curse/death' interpretation seeks to rebut the suggestion that the death of the errant Corinthian "atones for his sins" (which, if accepted, would offer an interpretation that featured the elements: curse, death, and

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<sup>325</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 171.

<sup>326</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 176.

<sup>327</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 171.

salvation).<sup>328</sup> Quoting from South, whose work is once again recycled, Garland concludes that this theory,

demonstrates how foreign to Paul's own thought the curse/death interpretation is and should be sufficient warning that this view does not rest on reliable exegetical ground.<sup>329</sup>

Of course, assuming that South is correct, one could only reasonably conclude that the idea of human death atoning for sin is inaccurate. Neither Garland's nor South's argument discredits a curse interpretation in its broadest sense. Moreover, this criticism is only relevant to a curse interpretation if it is presented as requiring death as the outcome of the curse.

Finally, contrary to Barrett, Garland argues that a "curse/death" reading erroneously assumes that Paul's primary concern was with the discipline of the errant Corinthian and not with the wider community.<sup>330</sup> However, it is hard to see this fine-point as a substantial criticism of a "curse/death" interpretation of verse 5, as there is nothing about a curse reading which negates the errant Corinthian's discipline for the sake of himself and the wider community.

Instead of a curse reading of 1 Corinthians 5, Garland argues that παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ "means to put the man out of the church and into the world, where Satan reigns (2 Cor. 4:4): Relinquish him to Satan's sphere of influence and let Satan work him over."<sup>331</sup>

### 1.3 Conclusion

From Tertullian (writing in the second century C. E.) to Garland (writing in the twenty-first century), we have critically surveyed nearly two millennia of reception history of

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<sup>328</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 171.

<sup>329</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 172 quoting South, "Critique", 558.

<sup>330</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 172.

<sup>331</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 154.



Paul's enigmatic words παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ (and εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός). We have seen that interpretations of verse 5 diverge sharply between curse and magic interpretations (in part 1.1), and non-curse and non-magic readings (in part 1.2).

In part 1.1, we noted a number of weaknesses in the various curse and magic readings of verse 5: firstly, the use of ambiguous—underdetermined—language such as “curse”, “magic”, “parallel”, “influence”, “background”. Whilst some scholars interpret the phrase παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ in terms of cursing, others focus upon εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός (some scholars interpret the two clauses together (παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός in terms of cursing or magic). The crux of these readings lies in the identification of “parallels” or “influences” (by which scholars mean different things) between various cursing or magical texts or traditions and verse 5. Frequently, the inclusion of extra-Pauline material (such as fourth century Greek magical texts) is often without adequate explanation, and verse 5—that is, one phrase within verse 5—is isolated from the wider context of the chapter.

Many of these critical weaknesses in the curse interpretation did not escape the attention of those scholars who advocated a non-curse reading (in part 1.2). However, whilst such scholars rightly noted the weakness of curse and magic readings, rather than attempt to reformulate a more satisfactory interpretation, many opted for an equally unpersuasive understanding of Paul's “hand over” phraseology—in terms of exclusion alone (in part 1.2.3).

For example, Murphy-O'Connor's reading is anachronistic, demonstrating a modern

concern with psychology. Some centuries earlier, Calvin's concern was political—being occupied with issues of governance, church, and state. Fee, writing in the context of 1987's North America, is free from Calvin's political concerns with church and state. Instead, his Protestant tradition is concerned with a contemporary application of verse 5. A curse that leads to physical destruction is eschewed in favour of an exclusion only reading—as he, and others, seek to establish the historical meaning of the text, which is considered applicable for today's church.<sup>332</sup> Whilst, in principle, this hermeneutic is neither problematic, nor the principle concern of this thesis, we argued that this approach unduly colours scholars' interpretation of verse 5 (both curse, and non-curse reading alike): if liberty to sever a link between the historical meaning of the text and contemporary application is not maintained, then such an approach precludes the majority of exegetes (possibly due to personal sensibilities) from interpreting verse 5 in terms of curse and death. We will return to this point.

Neither strands of interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5 are satisfactory in their current form. However, in the ensuing two parts of this study, we will argue that the curse interpretation of verse 5 is the most satisfactory of the two readings. Unlike many of the twentieth century scholars who articulated a curse interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5 in the light of the ancient practice of cursing, we are in the favourable position of possessing considerably more *epigraphic evidence* with which to reformulate the curse

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<sup>332</sup> Cf. Crocker (C. C. Crocker, *Reading 1 Corinthians in the Twenty-First Century* [New York and London: T & T Clark, 2004], 10) who admirably offers a reading of 1 Corinthians for contemporary readers, whilst respecting the ancient, foreign, nature of Paul's writing:

Occasionally, Paul's writing is highly charged rhetorically, to the point of being shocking and offensive to our ears—for who, in this day and age, would clinch an argument by cursing one's opponents (16:22) or by exhorting a congregation to hand someone over to Satan (5:5)? Thus, this canonical first letter of Paul to the Corinthians may not always address present-day readers, given its time-bound issues and language, style, and rhetoric, all of which reflect a world quite removed from our own. Hence, when reading 1 Corinthians, one needs to set things in their proper historical context. One has to be mindful of the vast historical distance between this ancient text and the contemporary reader, so that one does not fuse the horizons of these two worlds too easily, so that one does not naively (and thoughtlessly!) apply everything that Paul wrote to our present situation.



interpretation. In fact, we are in a prime position to undertake a long overdue *reconsideration* and *reformulation* of the curse interpretation, *rebutting* its critics, *bolstering* its argumentation, and *re-establishing* it as the most persuasive reading of 1 Corinthians 5:5—not by isolating this verse from the wider context of verse 5, but by interpreting it in light of Paul’s broader argument in 1 Corinthians 5.

## Part two: Jewish and Graeco-Roman Traditions of (Binding) Cursing

You taught me language; and my profit on't  
Is, I know how to curse: the red plague rid you,  
For learning me your language!<sup>1</sup>

In this part, we will consider ancient understandings of (“magical”) “cursing” through an examination of selected ancient Jewish and Graeco-Roman “curse” and “magical” material, which most commonly featured in “curse” and “magic” interpretations of 1 Corinthians 5:5 considered in part one: Tanakh (in part 2.1); “Curse Tablets” and “Binding Spells” (in part 2.2); *Dead Sea Scrolls* (in part 2.3); *Greek Magical Papyri* (in part 2.4); with the addition of *Sepher ha-Razim* (in part 2.5). Through this examination, we will seek to assess the evidence upon which “curse” or “magic” readings are based (cf. part 1.1).

We will pay particular attention to the idea of handing over a person to, for example, a daemon within the context of “cursing”. In so doing, we will demonstrate the existence of a cross-cultural understanding of “cursing” in the ancient world, in which a common language existed. Thus, we will avoid the flawed approach of some scholars who focus solely upon the presence of the word παραδίδωμι in certain “curse” and “magic” material.<sup>2</sup> In addition, we will note a chronological consistency in the way ‘hand over’ phraseology functions in earlier and later “curse” and “magic” material across a wide geographical range. This broad survey of “curse” material will serve as the basis for a new, fortified “curse” interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5 (in part three).

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<sup>1</sup> The words of the *dramatis persona* Caliban, in W. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, 2:363.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Part 1.1 and the subsequent criticism by scholars of this approach in part 1.2.3.



## 2.1 (“Magical”) “Cursing” in Tanakh

The term “curse” appears frequently in modern English translations of Tanakh. As such, Tanakh is, potentially,<sup>3</sup> a significant starting point for any consideration of Jewish “cursing”. The term “curse” renders a range of Hebrew terminology: אלה,<sup>4</sup> ארר,<sup>5</sup> תאלה,<sup>13</sup> שבועה,<sup>12</sup> קללה,<sup>11</sup> קלל,<sup>10</sup> קבב,<sup>9</sup> נקב,<sup>8</sup> מארה,<sup>7</sup> חרם,<sup>6</sup> בוך.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This qualification reflects the possibility that the English word “curse” may not accurately denote the Hebrew concept(s) of “cursing” (cf. Brichto [H. C. Brichto, *The Problem of “Curse” in the Hebrew Bible* (Journal of Biblical Literature Monograph Series 13; Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1968)] who presents a divergent range of meanings of the Hebrew terms for curse). We will explore this concern in the ensuing discussion. Furthermore, we will consider our use of English “curse” terminology in part 2.1.1.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Numbers 5:21, 23; Deuteronomy 29:20f.; 30:7; Judges 17:2; 2 Chronicles 34:24; Nehemiah 10:29; Job 31:30. The Septuagint frequently translates אלה, ארר, and קללה with cognates of ἀρά (such as ἐπικατάρατος and κατάρα).

<sup>5</sup> E.g. Genesis 3:14, 17; 4:11; 5:29; 9:25; 12:3; 27:29; 49:7; Exodus 22:28; Numbers 5:18f.; 22:6, 12; 23:7.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. Job 1:5, 11; 2:5, 9; Psalms 10:3.

<sup>7</sup> E.g. Zechariah 14:11; Malachi 4:6. חרם is rendered ἀνάθεμα in the Septuagint.

<sup>8</sup> E.g. Deuteronomy 28:20; Proverbs 3:33; 28:27; Malachi 2:2; 3:9.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. Numbers 23:8, 25; Job 3:8; 5:3; Proverbs 11:26; 24:24.

<sup>10</sup> E.g. Numbers 22:11, 17; 23:8, 11, 13, 27; 24:10.

<sup>11</sup> E.g. Genesis 8:21; 12:3; Exodus 21:17; Leviticus 19:14; 20:9; 24:11, 14f., 23.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Genesis 27:12f.; Deuteronomy 11:26, 28f.; 23:5; 27:13; 28:15, 45; 29:27; 30:1, 19; Joshua 8:34.

<sup>13</sup> E.g. Psalms 102:8; Isaiah 65:15.

<sup>14</sup> E.g. Lamentations 3:65.

Brichto, in his monograph *The Problem of "Curse" in the Hebrew Bible*,<sup>15</sup> rightly describes scholars' translation of this range of Hebrew terminology with the "semantically equivocal" English term "curse" as a "problem".<sup>16</sup> In response, he seeks to identify the original nuance of each Hebrew term.<sup>17</sup> Brichto rightly avoids an appeal to etymology.<sup>18</sup> Instead, he notes the importance of "contextual considerations", by which he means the literary context, or location, of the Hebrew "curse" terminology within Tanakh.<sup>19</sup> When this approach is exhausted,<sup>20</sup> he employs comparative material which he judges to contain "analogous concepts and terminology in the literature of Israel's neighbours", but only in an "ancillary" capacity.<sup>21</sup> Unlike Brichto, we are not concerned with establishing the "original denotation" of each Hebrew word for "curse",

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<sup>15</sup> Brichto, *Problem*, 1-232. Note other earlier treatments of this topic: J. Pedersen, *Der Eid bei den Semiten* (Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner, 1914), J. Hempel, "Die israelitischen Anschauungen von Segen und Fluch im Lichte altorientalischen Parallelen", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* (Neue Folge; Band 4, 1915), 20-110, S. Mowinckel, "Segen und Fluch in Israels Kult und Psalmdichtung" (Kristiania: Videnskapsselskapets Skrifter 2, Hist.-Filos. Klasse, 1923), S. H. Blank, "The Curse, Blasphemy, the Spell, and the Oath", *Hebrew Union College Annual* 23:1 (1950-1951), 73-95), J. Scharbert, "'Fluchen' und 'Segnen' im Alten Testament", *Biblica* 39 (1958), 1-26. Following Brichto's work, the most comprehensive discussions of 'cursing' in the Tanakh are contained within the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* arranged under the headings of the individual Hebrew terms for "curse".

<sup>16</sup> Cf. part one in which scholars were criticised for employing the equivocal term "curse" without adequate qualification.

<sup>17</sup> Brichto (*Problem*, 14) "attempt[s] to arrive at a more precise determination of the original denotation of each term, that is, of its narrowest meaning before its connotative value broadens its usage into synonymous ambiguity with other terms conceptually related but etymologically and semantically distinct."

<sup>18</sup> As words change meaning over time-space, etymology is no guarantee of establishing contemporary usage, or, for our purposes, first-century utilisation.

<sup>19</sup> Brichto, *Problem*, 14.

<sup>20</sup> It is often impossible to nuance Hebrew "curse" terminology from a consideration of its narrative context. For example, Brichto rightly concludes that in the account of Issac's blessing of Jacob (Genesis 27), we can add little further contextual nuance to אָרַךְ beyond the fact that it features in an "antonymous relationship" to בָּרַךְ (Brichto, *Problem*, 77. אָרַךְ and בָּרַךְ feature in a contrastive manner elsewhere in the Tanakh: Numbers 22:6, 12; 23:11, 25; 24:9, 10).

<sup>21</sup> Brichto, *Problem*, 14.



as Paul's "curse" terminology is in Greek and not Hebrew.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, Paul's Tanakh was not in Hebrew, but Greek (the Septuagint).<sup>23</sup>

Our exploration of cursing in part 2.1 is heuristically structured around the different senses of "curse" that emerge from our study of "curse" narratives in the Tanakh: "Unconditional" curses (in part 2.1.2); "conditional" (self-) "curses", "oaths", and "adjuratory" "curses" (in part 2.1.3); and "imprecatory" curses (in part 2.1.4).<sup>24</sup>

Before we nuance the generic word "curse", we will consider the definitional issues involved in establishing a working definition of this panoptic term (in part 2.1.1)—a procedure neglected by many of the scholars we considered in part one. Whilst contextualised within an examination of Tanakh, this study will provide us with a platform from which to consider a wider range of Jewish and Graeco-Roman curse material (in part 2.2).

### 2.1.1 On Labels and Definitions: "Cursing"

The English term "curse" is expressed variously as a noun, an adjective, and as a transitive or intransitive verb. Furthermore, a host of English terminology is employed synonymously with "curse": for example, "imprecation", "execration", "malediction",

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<sup>22</sup> Given that language is not stable, there are also difficulties in determining when one has reached the "original" (that is, stable) meaning. Furthermore, as language evolves, the "original" meaning of the curse terminology may have changed by Paul's time.

<sup>23</sup> As Brichto (*Problem*, 2) notes, translation involves loss. As such, one cannot precisely convey the nuance of a word from one language to another. This is significant for even if we could determine the original meaning of Hebrew curse terms, we should not imagine that the Hebrew terms for "curse" were translated into Greek in the Septuagint without a loss of nuance. On the issue of loss in translation, see U. Eco, *Mouse or Rat?: Translation as Negotiations* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2003).

<sup>24</sup> These different types of curse are not exclusive. Rather, it is possible that a curse might exhibit several different characteristics (for example, a curse could be "unconditional" and in the form of an "imprecation").

“anathema”, “ban”,<sup>25</sup> “adjuration”, and “beshrew”. Whilst Wiles clearly states that he uses “curse, imprecation, execration, and malediction...interchangeably”,<sup>26</sup> other scholars are less clear. Not only do they fail to define their use of, what Brichto rightly calls, the “semantically equivocal” term “curse”, but they compound the confusion that ensues by employing other words as synonyms for “curse”—without informing the reader.

We will work towards an operational definition of “curse” through a consideration of the impact of one’s epistemological framework upon an understanding of this term; and then an examination of the way in which the role of agency impacts upon the definition of “curse”.

In contemporary American English, more so than in British English, “curse” can describe a “profane word or phrase; a swearword” that is employed,<sup>27</sup> often with invective, as a transitive or intransitive verb: such as “damn you” or “damn”. In modern naturalistic Western thought, a “curse” word, or “curse” phrase, (such as “damn”) is not understood to contain a metaphysical power that can literally bedamn or commit another to Hell.<sup>28</sup> In this context, i.e., the context of a closed universe in which divine or supernatural power is precluded, when a swearword or “curse” term is employed

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<sup>25</sup> “Originally the curse formula (which came from the seminomadic world or Gentile society) gave expression to the banishing of the cursed person from the place of blessing provided by a community (Gen. 3:14; 4:11)” (W. Schottroff, “Curse”, E. Fahlbusch, J. M. Lochman, J. Mbiti, J. Pelikan, and L. Vischer [eds], *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, Vol. 1 A-D [Grand Rapids, W. B. Eerdmans, 1999], 758-759 at 758).

<sup>26</sup> Wiles, *Intercessory*, 116 n. 2.

<sup>27</sup> *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.; 2000).

<sup>28</sup> Consider the contemporary curse phrase “go to hell”, which expresses a more generalised desire that harm befall another. In this curse, “hell” functions as a metaphor for harm.



transitively, it can be said to communicate anger, ill-feeling, or a desire that harm befall another.

In the context of the ancient world, in which the supernatural and divine realm was not precluded, “curse” words could elicit metaphysical power. For example, unlike our contemporary illustration, within the world of Tanakh—an open universe in which supernatural and divine activity was envisaged—words of “cursing” could *cause* another to suffer harm (as we will demonstrate throughout our study in this part [2.1]).<sup>29</sup> Thus, Tanakh attests to the power of a “curse” to effectuate the loss of wealth, health, and status.

It is helpful to make a distinction between a definition of “curse” in terms of *form*, and the malevolent *consequences* that follow from the utterance of this curse. For example, “damn you” takes the *form* of a curse; it does not describe the *consequences* of a curse (what the outcome of the curse was). Some define “curse”, in the context of the ancient world, in terms of effects; that is “the evil that comes as if in response” to a “curse”.

This definitional confusion between *form* and *consequence* blunts the accuracy of discussions of “cursing”. We will reserve the use of the term “curse” to refer to a word, words, or action, that take the *form* of a “curse”: namely, an express desire for physical harm or injury to befall another by means of a metaphysical power. If we were to describe 1 Corinthians 5:5 in terms of a curse, we would mean that παραδοῦναι τὸν

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<sup>29</sup> “Curse” is also used metonymically in ancient literature to refer to the desired harm or injury that follows from a wish for harm or injury to befall another (i.e. a curse). Furthermore, it can also describe the one upon which harm or injury has been desired (the one accursed).

τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός takes the *form* of a curse: it expresses a desire for harm to befall another and is effectuated by a metaphysical means.<sup>30</sup>

Whilst there remains continuity in the structure of thought between ancient and contemporary uses of curse language—both intend harm—modern curse terminology has lost its valence in the West. Whereas modern cursing conveys the possibility of psychological harm (if one were traumatised by the abuse), ancient cursing has the capacity *to cause* not only psychological—but physical harm. The ancient understanding of curse raises the issue of agency: how is a curse enacted? Or how are curses empowered to cause physical harm? We will consider curse agency in the following two forms: firstly, “magical” agency; and secondly, “supernatural” or “divine” agency.

“Magic” is a problematic word with a long genealogy.<sup>31</sup> For some scholars, “magic” describes an aspect of religion; for others, it is a primitive precursor of, the more highly evolved, religion.<sup>32</sup> The definition of the term “magic” is fraught with difficulty. However, in the immediate context of our consideration of curse agency, Blank provides a helpful way forward. Speaking of curses in Tanakh, which contain no appeal, or implicit appeal, to supernatural or divine agency, he notes that:

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no external agent was assumed and, apparently, the spoken curse was itself and alone conceived to be the effective agent...The curse was automatic or self-fulfilling, having the

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<sup>30</sup> 1 Corinthians 5 does not recount the actual outcome—or *consequence*—of Paul’s command. As we noted in part one, some scholars maintain that 2 Corinthians 2 reveals the fate of the errant Corinthian in 1 Corinthians 5.

<sup>31</sup> For a useful overview, see G. Cunningham, *Religion & Magic* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1999).

<sup>32</sup> Consider J. G. Fraser’s influential presentation of “magic”, “religion”, and “science” in *The Golden Bough* (J. G. Fraser, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* [Abridged Edition, Papermac: London, 1995]).



nature of a <<spell,>> the very words of which were thought to possess reality and the power to effect the desired results.<sup>33</sup>

In the absence of an “external agent”, a curse can be considered “self-operative”. Given the ambiguous, multivalent, nature of the term “magic”—we will employ the word “self-operative” henceforth. The execution of this form of curse agency is believed by some to reside in folklore, in which there was a belief in the self-operative power of the spoken word.<sup>34</sup> In contrast to self-operative curse agency, curses can be enabled by divine or supernatural agency. In such curses, God (especially within Biblical literature) or a supernatural daemon (especially in Graeco-Roman writing) responds to the desire for harm to befall another by calling into play the curse:

As Israel’s polytheistic neighbors placed the curse under one or another deity, so Israel placed it under → Yahweh as the one who enforces it (Josh. 6:26; 1 Sam. 17:43; 26:19; 2 Kgs. 2:24). In this way it was taken out of the domain of magic (Prov. 26:2). With the introduction of the divine name, the indicative formula ’ārūr ’attâ (“cursed are you”) changed into a wish or petition.<sup>35</sup>

Curses in which supernatural or divine agency feature will be of particular interest to this study, for if the words of 1 Corinthians 5:5 are understood as a curse, then Satan features as the—supernatural—agent who brings about the curse.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Blank, “Curse”, 73-95 at 78.

<sup>34</sup> At this juncture, we are commenting more generally on the nature of curse agency. We are not arguing that self-operative curses exist in the Tanakh, a point of some dispute amongst scholars. For example, consider Schottroff (Schottroff, “Curse”, 758-759 at 758) who argues that,

[a]s elsewhere in antiquity, so too in Israel the curse and its opposite (→Blessing) were understood primarily as words of power that were thought to take effect magically. The curse was a materialized, harmful force that flew across the earth, overtook the one against whom it was uttered, and brought about his or her destruction (Zech. 5:1-4). To avert it, there was need of a countercurse (Gen. 27:29; Num. 24:9; Ps. 140:9-11) or of an opposing blessing (Judg. 17:2; 1 Kgs. 2:44-45).

<sup>35</sup> Schottroff, “Curse”, 758-759 at 758.

<sup>36</sup> Depending on one’s curse interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5:3-5, other agents might be considered in addition to Satan’s role: “Paul’s spirit”; the “Lord Jesus”. The efficacious nature of a curse is also dependent upon the ability of a human agent. For example, Balaam’s curses are considered to be

We have defined the generic term “curse” as *a word, form of words, or action that expresses a desire for physical harm to befall another* (that is, when curse is used transitively) which *calls into play a metaphysical power*. We have noted that in the context of the ancient world, it was anticipated that self-operative, supernatural, or divine agency would enact a curse—transforming it from an expression of abuse or ill intent, into a potent force for harm. Having established an operational definition of this term, we will nuance and qualify it further through an examination of Tanakh.

### 2.1.2 “Unconditional” Curses

An “unconditional” curse can be defined as a curse that contains no contingent element, leaving the victim with no control over the activation of the curse. We will illustrate this type of curse through a consideration of Jeremiah 29:21-22; 1 Samuel 17:43-44; and 2 Kings 2:24-25.

Jeremiah 29 is a narrative containing a letter sent from Jeremiah to the Babylonian exiles. In it he urges them not to listen to those false prophets who, claiming to speak on behalf of the LORD, are seeking an early return from exile.<sup>37</sup> Specifically, Jeremiah’s prophecy reserves special judgment for the false prophets “Ahab son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah son of Maaseiah”.<sup>38</sup> Their fate is to be publicly murdered—“roasted in the fire”<sup>39</sup>—by Nebuchadrezzar and to enter posterity in the form of the following curse:<sup>40</sup>

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powerful (Cf. Numbers 22:6).

<sup>37</sup> Jeremiah 29:8-10.

<sup>38</sup> Jeremiah 29:21.

<sup>39</sup> Jeremiah 29:22.

<sup>40</sup> Jeremiah 29:21. Cf. Zechariah 8:13, which indicates that the Israelites were also remembered in curses used by other nations. See also Isaiah 65:15-16. Conversely, in Genesis 48:20 “Ephraim and Manasseh” are remembered in an invocation of “blessing”. W. L. Holladay (*Jeremiah 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 26—52* [P. D. Hanson (ed.), Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989], 143) notes that,



Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning Ahab son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah son of Maaseiah, who are prophesying a lie to you in my name: I am going to deliver them into the hand of King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon, and he shall kill them before your eyes. And on account of them this curse [קללה: LXX, κατάρα<sup>41</sup>] shall be used by all the exiles from Judah in Babylon: "The LORD make you like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire".<sup>42</sup>

This קללה (or curse) is of especial interest, as rather than describing a curse, *it contains the actual words* of an ancient curse that were to be spoken by the Babylonian exiles: "The LORD make you like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in fire". A divine agent, in this instance "the LORD", is called upon through the words of this curse to make the victim ("you") suffer the same malevolent fate as "Zedekiah and Ahab"—that is a painful death.<sup>43</sup> This curse is unconditional, insofar as it contains no contingent element, leaving the victim with no control over whether or not the curse is activated once it has been spoken.

The account of the confrontation between David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17) is another interesting example of an unconditional curse:

The Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed [קלל: LXX, κατάρα] David by his gods. The Philistine said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the field."<sup>44</sup>

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If one may assume the correctness of the placement of v 15 in the present sequence, one may conclude that Jrm intends a stark contrast: those who acclaim Ahab and Zedekiah as prophets will soon be using their names for cursing; Yahweh's action in them is to give them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar for execution, not to raise them up as prophets (v 15).

<sup>41</sup> Jeremiah 29:21-22 (Massoretic Text) appears at Jeremiah 36:21-22 in the Septuagint.

<sup>42</sup> Jeremiah 29:21-22.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Nicholson: "so horrific was their fate that if a man wished to curse another he could do no better than call down upon him a fate similar to theirs" (E. W. Nicholson, *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 26-52* [The Cambridge Bible Commentary; P. R. Ackroyd, A. R. C. Leaney, and J. W. Packer (eds), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975], 47).

<sup>44</sup> 1 Samuel 17:43-44.

In disdain at David's appearance,<sup>45</sup> Goliath calls down a curse on David by addressing "his gods"—a divine agent—to effectuate his curse.<sup>46</sup> Brichto, following Scharbert,<sup>47</sup> disputes this reading by arguing that Goliath's words in verse forty-four do not constitute a curse.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, Brichto notes that David makes no "counter-imprecation [or counter-curse, following our definition]",<sup>49</sup> and then asserts that Goliath is unlikely to have resorted to a curse given his significant advantage:

It should be kept in mind that imprecation is resorted to out of a sense of helplessness. When all other resources fail—that is when the gods are called upon to take a hand. Goliath's disdain for his youthful opponent would not lead us to expect an imprecation from him.<sup>50</sup>

However, Brichto's argument suffers by overlooking the theological function of Goliath's curse in this narrative. Goliath's curse appears not out of "helplessness", but as a theological device. The scene has been set for a divine showdown between the "gods of the Philistines" and the "LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel".<sup>51</sup> In spite of Goliath's curse, Goliath will die along with his army "so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel".<sup>52</sup> Goliath's curse sets the scene for the LORD's triumph. Later writers certainly appear to have viewed the narrative in this manner. Consider Psalm 151 in which the Goliath's "gods" (1 Samuel 17:43) are exchanged for "idols", which are to be vanquished:

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<sup>45</sup> 1 Samuel 17:42.

<sup>46</sup> 1 Samuel 17:44.

<sup>47</sup> Scharbert, "Fluchen", 10.

<sup>48</sup> Brichto (*Problem*, 173-174) uses the term "imprecation" to nuance this curse. We will nuance this word in a different manner (see part 2.1.4).

<sup>49</sup> Brichto, *Problem*, 174. We will nuance the term 'imprecation', which features here in a quotation from Brichto, in part 2.1.4.

<sup>50</sup> Brichto, *Problem*, 174 n. 122.

<sup>51</sup> 1 Samuel 17:45.

<sup>52</sup> 1 Samuel 17:47.



I went out to meet the Philistine, and he cursed me by his idols. But I drew his own sword;  
I beheaded him, and took away disgrace from the people of Israel.<sup>53</sup>

This indeterminate Philistine curse—which features the calling upon of Philistine deities to smite David—is similar to many of the Israelite curses contained within Tanakh, highlighting the cross-cultural nature of cursing in the ancient world.

Elisha, journeying on his way to Bethel, encounters “some small boys” who taunt him with the words “Go away, baldhead! Go away, baldhead!”<sup>54</sup> Elisha responds with a curse (קלל), the details of which are unrecorded, that has fatal consequences:

When he turned around and saw them, he cursed [קלל: LXX, κατάρα] them in the name of the LORD. Then two she-bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys.<sup>55</sup>

As in the account of David and Goliath, this curse can be more specifically understood as an unconditional curse that appeals to divine agency in order to inflict harm upon another: Elisha (the human agent) curses his victims (the “boys”) by appealing to divine agency (“the LORD”). This curse is striking; it is swift, brutal, and effective: “forty-two of the boys” are “mauled” and killed by “two she-bears”.<sup>56</sup>

Unconditional curses are attested throughout Tanakh. For their victims, they offer no control over the activation of the curse. We will now consider forms of conditional curses that allow the potential victim the possibility of averting a curse.

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<sup>53</sup> Psalm 151:6-7 (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha: The Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books of the Old Testament* [B. M. Metzger and R. E. Murphy (eds), New York: Oxford University Press, 1991]).

<sup>54</sup> 2 Kings 2:24-25.

<sup>55</sup> 2 Kings 2:25.

<sup>56</sup> Gray (J. Gray, *1 and 2 Kings: A Commentary* [London: SCM Press, 1964], 429), who is clearly disturbed by this conclusion, erroneously states that: “The supposition that Elisha invoked the name of Yahweh to curse the boys, with such terrible consequences, is derogatory to the great public figure, and borders on blasphemy.” *Contra* Gray, our discussion of imprecatory cursing (in part 2.1.4) will demonstrate that the boundaries of taste and decency were conceived differently from contemporary religious sensibilities.

### 2.1.3 “Conditional” (Self-) Curses, “Oaths”, and “Adjuratory” Curses

Unlike the unconditional curses considered above, some curses are conditional; that is, the curse remains inactive until certain conditions are in place. Consider the following conditional curse pronounced by Joshua following the fall of Jericho:<sup>57</sup>

Cursed [ארר: LXX, ἐπικατάρατος] before the LORD be anyone who tries to build this city—this Jericho! At the cost of his firstborn he shall lay its foundation, and at the cost of his youngest he shall set up its gates!<sup>58</sup>

If anyone tries to rebuild Jericho, this conditional curse will become active.<sup>59</sup> At the initial stage of reconstruction, the firstborn child will die. Later, upon the setting up of the gates, the youngest child will die. The book of 1 Kings attributes the deaths of Abiram and Segub to the effects of this conditional curse:

In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho; he laid its foundation at the cost of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spoke by Joshua son of Nun.<sup>60</sup>

The term “oath” is employed metonymically as a term for curse.<sup>61</sup> However, to be precise, an “oath” is a different phenomenon to a curse. The *OED* describes an “oath”

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<sup>57</sup> Brichto (*Problem*, 79) rightly argues that Joshua 6:26 is not an adjuration.

<sup>58</sup> Joshua 6:26.

<sup>59</sup> A curse from the Cairo Genizah against the theft of a sacred book features Joshua’s curse:

This Book of the Law is exclusively dedicated to God, (3) the God of Israel. It should not be sold or redeemed. Whoever sells it, steals it, or takes it out (4) in order to sell it or steal it, shall be under the ban of the God of Hosts and under the ban that Joshua (5) son of Nun imposed on Jericho, and under the ban that the ten brothers of Joseph imposed, and the Divine Presence (6) was with them...May he be cursed with ninety-eight admonitions. May God refuse to forgive him. May God (15) separate him for ill from all the tribes of Israel, and wipe his name off from under the sky. May his sons (16) become orphaned, and his wife widowed. May he be lost, subdued, destroyed, and may his name be erased (17) from the book of the living. Any one who steals or sells it shall be...(18) these curses and (others) like these (J. Naveh and S. Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* [Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1993], 212-214).

Cf. “Every lost object about which it is not known who stole it from the property of the camp in which it was stolen – its owner should make a maledictory [אלה] oath [שבועה]; whoever hear it, if he knows and does not say it, is guilty” (CD-A 9:10-12).

<sup>60</sup> 1 Kings 16:34.



as: “A solemn appeal to God (or to something sacred) in witness that a statement is true, or a promise binding.”<sup>62</sup> In Tanakh, “an oath is feared because of the imprecation(s) [or curse(s)] in it.”<sup>63</sup> As Cryer states:

As was the case elsewhere in the ancient Near East, contracts in ancient Israel and Judah were routinely concluded by the utterance of oaths, which may be understood as self-curses, the voluntary taking upon oneself of the consequences attendant upon transgressing against the conditions stated in the transaction in question.<sup>64</sup>

Thus, an “oath” can be understood as a conditional self-curse in which one invites a curse upon oneself *if* one breaks the terms of the oath.<sup>65</sup> Numbers 5:11-31 outlines legislation for dealing with a wife who is accused by her jealous husband of committing adultery. This account contains an oath, a conditional self-curse, and an adjuratory curse: a specific form of conditional curse “invoked not upon the person speaking but upon a party in the second or third (grammatical) person.”<sup>66</sup>

Scholars understand this narrative in relation to an ancient Near Eastern “ordeal” ritual.<sup>67</sup> The woman’s ordeal takes the following form: following the LORD’s

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<sup>61</sup> Brichto, *Problem*, 1-2.

<sup>62</sup> *OED*, 1348.

<sup>63</sup> Brichto, *Problem*, 26. Oaths, as a form of the cross-cultural phenomenon of cursing, feature in other traditions, such as Greek cursing (cf. C. A. Faraone, “Molten Wax, Spilt Wine and Mutilated Animals: Sympathetic Magic in near Eastern and Early Greek Oath Ceremonies”, *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 113 [1993], 60-80). See also, I. M. Price, “The Oath in Court Procedure in Early Baby-Lonia and the Old Testament”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 49 (1929), 22-29.

<sup>64</sup> F. H. Cryer, “Magic in Ancient Syria—Palestine—and in the Old Testament” in B. Ankarloo and S. Clark (eds), *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Biblical and Pagan Societies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 141.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Leviticus 26:14-40; Deuteronomy 28:15-68.

<sup>66</sup> Brichto (*Problem*, 40-41), discerns a number of different types of adjuratory curses, which employ the Hebrew term אלה. For example, he argues that adjuratory curses can function as a means of summoning “witnesses and malefactors” when a crime has been committed (*Problem*, 42-45).

<sup>67</sup> J. Milgrom, *Numbers: (Ba-midbar): The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 37. Whilst affirming this as an “ordeal”, Cryer (“Magic”, 142) also more broadly concludes that “[t]he rite is, then, formally simply a divinatory

instructions,<sup>68</sup> the husband as the sole agent of this prosecution, is to bring his wife to the priest along with a “grain offering of remembrance”.<sup>69</sup> The priest then places the women “before the LORD”,<sup>70</sup> which is most likely before the altar.<sup>71</sup> The priest then makes the woman drink “sacred” water to which has been added dust from the floor of the Tabernacle.<sup>72</sup> Her head is then revealed and the grain offering placed in her hands. In the priest’s hands is the “water of bitterness that brings the curse [ארר: LXX, ἐπικατάρατος]”.<sup>73</sup> The woman is then required by the priest to take an oath—which amounts to an adjuratory curse.<sup>74</sup> If she has had sexual relations with her husband alone, then she will be protected from the malevolent effects of the curse:

Then the priest shall make her take an oath [שביע: LXX, ὅρκος], saying, “If no man has lain with you, if you have not turned aside to uncleanness while under your husband’s authority, be immune to this water of bitterness that brings the curse [ארר: LXX, κατάρα].”<sup>75</sup>

In verse 21, the narrative instructs the priest to get the woman to take the “oath [שביע: LXX, ὅρκος] of the curse [אלה: LXX, ἀρά].”<sup>76</sup> The text of the adjuration is brutal,

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act yielding a binary answer”. On this basis, he suggests that this self-curse is a variety of the “African poison oracle” and the “seventeenth-century Western European witch test” (Cryer, “Magic”, 142). For a discussion of hydromancy, see A. Jeffers, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 160-166.

<sup>68</sup> Numbers 5:11 claims divine authority for this process, which was spoken to Moses in order to be relayed to the Israelites.

<sup>69</sup> Numbers 5:15.

<sup>70</sup> Numbers 5:16.

<sup>71</sup> Milgrom, *Numbers*, 39. Cf. 1 Kings 8:31-32.

<sup>72</sup> “Dust from the temple gate (i.e., the courtyard) was an ingredient in a prophylactic potion for the horses and troops of the Babylonian kings, and...dust from the city gates of Mari was used in a water ordeal. The ground of the sacred area was regarded as having greater potency, whether for warding off evil (Mesopotamia) or causing it (Israel)” (Milgrom, *Numbers*, 39).

<sup>73</sup> Numbers 5:18.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Numbers 5:21-22.

<sup>75</sup> Numbers 5:19-20.

<sup>76</sup> Numbers 5:21.



striking at the heart of the woman's reproductive faculties:

the LORD make you a curse [אלה: LXX, ἄρα] and an oath [שביע: LXX, ὅρκος] among your people by the LORD'S making your thigh waste away and your abdomen swell.<sup>77</sup>

Verse twenty-two reintroduces the role of the “water of bitterness that brings the curse”.<sup>78</sup> The effects of the water mirror the consequences of the curse in verse twenty-one: it will make the woman's “thigh waste away” and her “abdomen swell”.<sup>79</sup> The woman assents to the oath with her words of agreement at the end of verse 22 (“Amen. Amen.”)—thereby self-cursing herself.<sup>80</sup> If she is guilty, then by her own assent, the words of curse contained within the oath are to become effective.

The woman's “thigh” (“uterus” *New Revised Standard Version* [hereafter *NRSV*]) is to “sag” and her “belly” (“womb” *NRSV*) is to “distend”.<sup>81</sup> Whilst there is disagreement amongst scholars as to the exact meaning of these words,<sup>82</sup> verse twenty eight suggests that infertility is the result of the curse. In response to the woman's alleged immorality, the curse threatens to strike violently at the core of her reproductive capabilities. Now

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<sup>77</sup> Numbers 5:19.

<sup>78</sup> Numbers 5:19. Cf. Genesis 14:7; 1 Kings 1:9.

<sup>79</sup> The role of agency in this oath is intriguing: is it the water that delivers the curse through self-operative agency, or is it divine agency in operation? The reference to “the LORD” suggests divine agency. Milgrom, persuasively, highlights that verse 21b interjects clumsily into the proceedings, breaking the flow of the priest's adjuration:

The ostensible redundancy between verses 21b and 22a is thereby explained: The punishment suffered by the guilty woman is not to be attributed to inherent magical powers of the water (v.22a) but to the sovereign will of God (v.21b). Thus it seem likely that verse 21, which interrupts the smooth sequence of verses 20 and 22, was added to emphasize the point that the imprecation derives its powers not from the waters but from the Lord. This insertion must be early since the element stating that the guilty woman will be an object of derision (v.21a) is present in the wording of the final prognosis (v.27b). (Milgrom, *Numbers*, 41).

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Deuteronomy 27:15-26 in which “Amen” is used twelve times to consent to the various curses. For a full discussion of this passage, cf. part 3.2.1.

<sup>81</sup> Numbers 5:21.

<sup>82</sup> Milgrom, *Numbers*, 41.

the name of this woman—if guilty—will become synonymous with a curse amongst the Israelites.<sup>83</sup>

Once the curse has been spoken to the woman, it is written down and washed away into the “water of bitterness.”<sup>84</sup> A sympathetic action follows: as the curse is washed away, so the woman’s fertility is erased. The woman is made to drink the “water of bitterness that brings the curse” (the text largely repeats itself at this juncture):<sup>85</sup>

When he [the priest] has made her drink the water, then, if she has defiled herself and has been unfaithful to her husband, the water that brings the curse shall enter into her and cause bitter pain, and her womb shall discharge, her uterus drop, and the woman shall become an execration among her people. But if the woman has not defiled herself and is clean, then she shall be immune and be able to conceive children.<sup>86</sup>

#### 2.1.4 ‘Imprecatory’ Curses

The English curse term “imprecation”, from the Latin *precor* “to pray”, can be nuanced in terms of a prayer for harm or misfortune to befall another. Watson, although writing in the context of Greek cursing,<sup>87</sup> instructively outlines the interrelationship between cursing and prayer:

[There is] a material interrelationship between the actions of praying and cursing. A prayer requests something which is beneficial to the person uttering it. But sometimes this takes the form of harm to an enemy, in which case the prayer becomes in effect a curse.<sup>88</sup>

There are a number of imprecatory curses contained in the Psalms, which seeks to curse an enemy.<sup>89</sup> We will focus upon Psalms 69 and 109. “Save me, O God”: these opening

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<sup>83</sup> Numbers 5:21. Cf. Isaiah 65:15; Jeremiah 29:22.

<sup>84</sup> Numbers 5:23.

<sup>85</sup> Numbers 5:24.

<sup>86</sup> Numbers 5:27-29.

<sup>87</sup> We will examine Greek cursing in parts 2.2 and 2.4.

<sup>88</sup> L. Watson, *ARAE The Curse Poetry of Antiquity* (ARCA 26; Leeds: Francis Cairns, 1991), 3. In Greek cursing tradition, the common curse term ἀπά can also mean “prayer” (Watson, *ARAE*, 3).



words of the Psalmist's prayer seek deliverance from persecution.<sup>90</sup> The Psalmist is reviled; specifically, he has been unjustly accused of stealing.<sup>91</sup> In response, he prays to Yahweh for help.<sup>92</sup> The Psalmist's enemies poisoned his food.<sup>93</sup> It is now their food that will be poisoned,<sup>94</sup> as the Psalmist conceives a striking imprecation to bring revenge upon them in the form of ill health, damnation, and the death of their families:<sup>95</sup>

Let their table be a trap for them, a snare for their allies. Let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and make their loins tremble continually. Pour out your indignation upon them, and let your burning anger overtake them. May their camp be a desolation; let no one live in their tents...Add guilt to their guilt; may they have no acquittal from you. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living; let them not be enrolled among the righteous. But I am lowly and in pain; let your salvation, O God, protect me.<sup>96</sup>

Some scholars are clearly uncomfortable with such a curse taking the form of a prayer.<sup>97</sup>

For example, Oesterley remarks that this imprecation "sound[s] painful to our ears".<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> E.g. Psalms 5; 6; 11; 12; 35; 37; 40; 52; 56; 58; 69; 79; 83; 109; 137; 139; 143.

<sup>90</sup> Psalm 69:1.

<sup>91</sup> Psalm 69:4.

<sup>92</sup> Psalm 69:5-18.

<sup>93</sup> Psalm 69:21.

<sup>94</sup> Psalm 69:22.

<sup>95</sup> W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Psalms* (Vol. 2, London: SPCK, 1939), 332. Cf. Davidson (R. Davidson, *The Vitality of Worship: A Commentary on the Book of Psalms* [Grand Rapids: WM B. Eerdmans, 1998], 220) who is less graphic at this point: "The psalmist has been alienated from his own family (v. 8), so he prays for a time when their "camps" and "tents," in other words their homes, will be desolate and deserted (v. 25)."

<sup>96</sup> Psalm 69:22-25, 26-29.

<sup>97</sup> Psalm 69 features twice in a curse inscribed on a Mesopotamian incantation bowl (no. 9): (1)...and stars and planets (2) and all the vomit(?) and spittle of Judah son of Nany, that his tongue may dry up in his mouth, that his spittle may dissolve (3) in his throat, that his legs may dry, that sulphur and fire may burn in him, that his body may be struck by scalding (?), that he may be choked, become estranged, (4) become disturbed to the eyes of all those who see him, and that he may be banned, broken, lost, finished, vanquished, and that he may die, and that a flame may come him from heaven, (5) and shiver seize him, and a fracture catch him, and a rebuke burn in him. May the following verse apply to him: they shall fall and not arise, and there will be no power for them to stand up (6) after their defeat, and there will be no healing to their affliction. "Their eyes will darken, so that they see not, and their loins will be made by continually to shake" (Ps. 69:24). "Let their habitation be desolate, and let none dwell in their tents" (Ps. 69:26) (J. Naveh and S. Shaked, *Amulets*

Again, Rhodes' careful words convey distance and disapproval: "In the light of the religious outlook of his day...the psalmist feels justified in retaliating with a prayer of cursing (verses 22-28)."<sup>99</sup>

Scholars' discomfort concerning imprecatory cursing is acute in Psalm 109.<sup>100</sup> In this Psalm, the Psalmist is the victim of false accusation.<sup>101</sup> His enemies seek to have him found guilty before a trial and put to death.<sup>102</sup> A detailed imprecatory curse follows:

May his days be few; may another seize his position. May his children be orphans, and his wife a widow. May his children wander about and beg; may they be driven out of the ruins they inhabit. May the creditor seize all that he has; may strangers plunder the fruits of his toil. May there be no one to do him a kindness, nor anyone to pity his orphaned children. May his posterity be cut off; may his name be blotted out in the second generation. May the iniquity of his father be remembered before the LORD, and do not let the sin of his mother be blotted out. Let them be before the LORD continually, and may his memory be cut off from the earth. For he did not remember to show kindness, but pursued the poor and needy and the brokenhearted to their death. He loved to curse; let curses come on him. He did not like blessing; may it be far from him. He clothed himself with cursing as his coat, may it soak into his body like water, like oil into his bones. May it be like a garment that he wraps around himself, like a belt that he wears every day.<sup>103</sup>

Holladay notes that many contemporary scholars maintain that this imprecation (vv. 8-19) is not to be attributed to the Psalmist, but to his enemies.<sup>104</sup> Whilst Oesterley

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*and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* [Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1987], 175-177).

The curse continues by quoting, in a similar manner to the Psalm 69 references: Exodus 22:23; Leviticus 26:29; Deuteronomy 28:22, 28, 35; 29:19; Micah 7:16-17.

<sup>98</sup> Oesterley, *Psalms*, 332.

<sup>99</sup> A. B. Rhodes, *Psalms* (London: SCM Press, 1964), 105.

<sup>100</sup> D. R. Blumenthal, *Facing the Abusing God* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 124.

<sup>101</sup> Psalm 109:2-3.

<sup>102</sup> Psalm 109:6-7, 31. The *NRSV* interprets verses 6-7 as a quotation of the Psalmist's enemies.

<sup>103</sup> Psalm 109:8-19.

<sup>104</sup> W. L. Holladay, *The Psalms through Three Thousand Years: Prayerbook of a Cloud of Witnesses* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 309. Rogerson and McKay points to verse 20 as evidence that, whatever the case, the Psalmist prays to Yahweh that these curses befall his enemies (J. W. Rogerson and J. W. McKay, *Psalms 101-150*, Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, 62). Cf. Kraus (H. J. Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A*



accepts that the imprecations contained in verses 8-20 are the Psalmist's, he seeks to relocate this curse outside the religious sphere:

This psalm belongs to magical texts rather than to religious literature. There are imprecatory elements in some other psalms, but in none is there the exaggerated vindictiveness characteristic of this one.<sup>105</sup>

The practice of imprecatory cursing has a long tradition.<sup>106</sup> Whilst divine agency features in many curses (especially in Tanakh), in imprecatory cursing, God is explicitly addressed through prayer as the one who will inflict physical suffering in the form of a curse upon another.

Further to our generic definition of cursing (cf. part 2.1.1), we have further refined our vocabulary of cursing through an exploration of Tanakh, in which a variety of curses are in evidence. Curses can be unconditional (cf. part 2.1.2), or conditional (cf. 2.1.3). They can take the form of a self-curse in an oath, or an individual can place another person under oath by adjuring them with a curse (cf. part 2.1.3). As we noted, curses can take the form of a prayer in imprecatory cursing (cf. part 2.1.4), in which their presence disrupts the thinking of those who would wish to distinguish between religious activity, and cursing.

## 2.2 'Curse Tablets' and 'Binding Spells'

Tablets inscribed with curses and "binding spells" provide evidence of a fertile Greek cursing tradition, having been discovered in their hundreds throughout the Graeco-

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*Commentary* [trans. H. C. Oswald; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989], 338-339) who constructs verse twenty in a manner that negates Rogerson and McKay's criticism.

<sup>105</sup> Oesterley, *Psalms*, 457. Cf. Oesterley (*Psalms*, 460-461) also expresses a general distaste at the contents of this Psalm, highlighting the cutting words of this imprecation.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. the following Christian curse from the Common Era: "† † † Holy god, Gabriel, Michael, do what is sufficient for me, Mesa. Lord god, strike Philadelphie and her children. Lord, lord, lord, god, god, strike along with her Ou[...]sou. Christ, have mercy upon me and hear me, lord" (M. Meyer and R. Smith (eds), *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994], 52).

Roman world.<sup>107</sup> Metal, and in particular, lead,<sup>108</sup> or lead alloy, is the most common material used in the production of these tablets, which were inscribed, sometimes by professionals,<sup>109</sup> with the frequent intention of “bring[ing] supernatural power to bear against persons and animals”.<sup>110</sup> Tablets containing curses and “binding spells” date from the fifth century BCE to the sixth century CE.<sup>111</sup> The geographical positioning of such material was varied, though specific: temples,<sup>112</sup> springs, and wells<sup>113</sup> (as the entrances to the depths of Hades inhabited by the gods of the earth, Hekate, Hermes, and Persephone) were all choice locations. However, cemeteries, the place of the dead, were particularly popular.<sup>114</sup> Those angry spirits who had died prematurely (ἄωποι meaning “premature dead” or βίαιοθάνατοι meaning “violently killed”<sup>115</sup>) could be commissioned to bring into play a “binding spell” or curse. For example, the following excerpt from the *Greek Magical Papyri* (cf. part 2.4) details the manufacture and enactment of a lead tablet upon which a “binding spell” was to be inscribed:<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> J. G. Gager (ed.), *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3-4.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. *GMP* 7:417-422.

<sup>109</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 2:364C: “Begging priests and soothsayers go to the doors of the wealthy and convince them that if you want to harm an enemy, at very little expense, whether he deserves it or not, they will persuade the gods through charms and binding spells [κατάδεσμοι] to do your bidding” (Gager, *Curse*, 249).

<sup>110</sup> D. R. Jordan, “Defixiones From a Well Near the Southwest Corner of the Athenian Agora”, *Hesperia* 54 (1985), 205-255 at 206.

<sup>111</sup> Jordan, “Agora”, 206 n. 2.

<sup>112</sup> Newton claims that the tablet (*DTA*:4:1-10) may have been hung on a temple wall (C. T. Newton, *A History of Discoveries at Halicarnassus, Cnidus and Branchidae* [London, 1863, vol. 2], 719-745).

<sup>113</sup> Cf. *GMP* 7:451-452 (All Greek renderings of *GMP* are from *PGM*): “But if you cause [the plate] to be buried or [sunk in] river or land or sea or stream or coffin or in a well”.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Faraone for a consideration of the principle behind such positioning (C. A. Faraone, “The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells” in C. A. Faraone, D. Obbink [eds], *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic & Religion*, [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991], 3-32 at 9).

<sup>115</sup> J. H. Waszink, *Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum* 2 (Stuttgart: Hiersmann, 1954), 391-394.

<sup>116</sup> Faraone, “Context”, 3.



And take a lead tablet and write the same / spell [λόγος] and recite it. And tie the lead leaf to the figures with thread from the loom after making 365 knots while saying as you have learned, “ABRASAX, hold her fast!” You place it, as the sun is setting, beside the grave of one who has died untimely [ἄωρος] or violently [βίαιος], placing beside it also the seasonal flowers.”<sup>117</sup>

Given the special power of the ἄωροι and βιαιοθάνατοι,<sup>118</sup> it is not surprising that, where bodies have been discovered in graves accompanied by tablets containing curses and “binding spells”, the “estimated” age of the dead has been considered to be young.<sup>119</sup>

The content of such tablets is varied, encompassing many aspects of human life. As such, Gager is able to structure his edited collection of various curse tablets and “binding spells” under a broad range of headings, which encompass a wide spectrum of ancient human experience: “Competition in Theater and Circus”;<sup>120</sup> “Sex, Love, and Marriage”;<sup>121</sup> “Tongue-Tied in Court: Legal and Political Disputes”;<sup>122</sup> “Businesses, Shops, and Taverns”;<sup>123</sup> and “Pleas for Justice and Revenge”.<sup>124</sup> Many other forms of

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<sup>117</sup> *GMP* 4:330-334. Cf. *PGM* 4:2006-2125 which illustrates the use of a νεκύδαμον.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Versnel, “As noted earlier, these texts are frequently concerned with abnormal and hence puzzling death, the deceased being referred to as an ἄωροι or βιαιοθάνατοι, i.e. someone who has died ‘before his fated time’. As is typical in traditional, premodern societies, the inexplicable death, for example by a lingering illness, is frequently attributed to the evil practices of unknown enemies” (H. S. Versnel, “Κόλασαι τοὺς ἡμᾶς τοιούτους ἡδέως βλέποντες ‘Punish those who rejoice in our misery’: On curse texts and *Schadenfreude*” in D. R. Jordan, H. Montgomery & E. Thomassen [eds], *The world of ancient magic: Papers from the first International Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens 4-8 May 1997* [Bergen: Norwegian Institute at Athens, 1999], 125-162 at 131). See *PGM* 4:1915, 1950.

<sup>119</sup> D. R. Jordan, “New Archaeological Evidence for the Practice of Magic in Classical Athens” in *Praktika of the 12<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Classical Archaeology* (vol. 4, Athens, 1998), 273-277 at 273.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. Gager, *Curse*, 42-77. Cf. D. R. Jordan, “Inscribed Lead Tablets from the Games in the Sanctuary of Poseidon”, *Hesperia* 63:1 (1994), 111-126.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. Gager, *Curse*, 78-115.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Gager, *Curse*, 116-150.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Gager, *Curse*, 151-174.

categorisation are possible other than Gager's topical approach. One could classify "curse tablets" by age, by geography, by the recurrent formulaic language employed, or even by any other material that accompanied the "curse tablet".

On occasion, disagreement over categorisation highlights an underlying ambiguity within scholarly discourse concerning the *actual identification* of "curse tablets";<sup>125</sup> that is, what phenomenon constitutes a "curse tablet"? We will explore this question through a consideration of the terms κατάδεσμος and *defixio*, which are employed as "binding spells" in part 2.2.1.

### 2.2.1 On Labels and Definitions: 'Curse Tablets' and 'Binding Spells'

Dickie, in his recent (2001) work, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, associates the term κατάδεσμος with a class of "spells" commonly employed by magicians, known as "binding spells":

There is a form of spell that must have been very much part of the stock-in-trade of many magicians. It is the spell very often now called a binding-spell. The Greek for these spells is katadeseis or katadesmoi, terms that literally mean "a means of binding down".<sup>126</sup>

Δέω (meaning "I bind") often appears in formulae (found on metal tablets) in a number of lexical forms including its natural state.<sup>127</sup> For example, the Attic contraction

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<sup>124</sup> Cf. Gager, *Curse*, 175-199.

<sup>125</sup> For example, Versnel argues that "judicial prayers" are not "curse tablets"; even though they "carry all the obvious characteristics of the *defixio* [a term Versnel uses as a synonym for "curse tablet"]...[they] have particularities pointing to another kind of mentality" (H. Versnel, "Beyond Cursing: The Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers", in C. A. Faraone, D. Obbink (eds), *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic & Religion*, [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991], 63).

However, Versnel does acknowledge a "Border Area", which contains material that falls in between the categories of "curse tablets" and "judicial prayers", thereby implicitly acknowledging that the task of classification is equivocal (Versnel, "Beyond", 68). Whilst Gager acknowledges Versnel's argument, he continues to refer to "judicial prayers" (or "pleas for justice and revenge" as Gager entitles them) as *defixiones*—a traditional term for "curse tablet" (Gager, *Curse*, 175).

<sup>126</sup> M. W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London: Routledge, 2001), 17. Cf. Gager, *Curse*, 30 n. 1.



καταδῶ is widely attested,<sup>128</sup> whilst forms of δέω, such as δεσμεύω appear in some binding spell phraseology, “I bind (δεσμεύω) Isias before Hermes the Restrainer, the hands, the feet of Isias, the entire body.”<sup>129</sup> For Dickie, such ‘binding spells’—or κατάδεσμοι—are thus named due to the “original function”, or “use” to which they were put: namely “to impose constraints on [i.e. to bind] the activities of an opponent”:<sup>130</sup>

The original function of katadeseis and katadesmoi may have been to impose constraints on an opponent, but by the fourth century BC, if not earlier, spells intended to inflict harm on enemies rather than just impose temporary constraints on them are denominated katadeseis or katadesmoi. By the middle of the fourth century BC lead tablets were used not only to constrain and harm enemies, but in erotic magic to secure the affections of another.<sup>131</sup>

Dickie discerns the evolution of κατάδεσμοι, pin-pointing two later uses of binding spells beyond the act of temporarily constraining: the inflicting of “harm on enemies”, and the use of binding spells to attract another through “erotic magic”.<sup>132</sup>

Binding spells were often “written on thin beaten-out sheets of lead, which were then generally rolled up and in Greek times pierced by a nail”.<sup>133</sup> Gager explains that the rolling action can be understood as a performative action: a “binding by rolling [i.e. the

<sup>127</sup> Δέω appears infrequently in a uncompounded form. Cf. *DT* 81:A3.

<sup>128</sup> For the appearance of various forms of καταδῶ in curse tablets from Achaia, cf. *DT* 49:1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 17; 52:5, 10; 64:5, 6, 7; 65:1; 66:4, 6; 67:4, 7; 68:A1, B4; 82:B; 85:B; W. S. Fox, “Two Tabellae Defixionum in the Royal Ontario Museum”, *American Journal of Philology* 34:1 (1913), 74-80 at 77-78. For καταδήω, cf. *DT* 70:1, 2, 4, 5, 6; 72:1; 73:1. For καταδέω, cf. *DT* 71:2. For a possible African occurrence of καταδέω, cf. *DT* 256:11.

<sup>129</sup> D. R. Jordan, “A Survey of Greek Defixiones Not Included in the Special Corpora”, *Greek Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 26 (1985), 151-197 at 169. Hereafter, SGD followed by the item number. In this instance, SGD 64.

<sup>130</sup> Dickie, *Magic*, 17.

<sup>131</sup> Dickie, *Magic*, 17. Similarly, Faraone argues that early Greek binding spells were traditionally used in an “agonistic context” and were intended to bind (or constrain), but not “destroy the victim” (Faraone, “Context”, 3).

<sup>132</sup> Dickie, *Magic*, 17. We will explore the relationship between ‘binding spells’ and cursing in erotic ‘magic’ in part 2.2.1.1.

<sup>133</sup> Dickie, *Magic*, 17.

rolling of the tablet]”.<sup>134</sup> This action may supplement, or function in lieu of the inscription of binding formulae upon the metal tablet.

Before we proceed, a brief summary will aid our discussion. We have seen that Dickie uses κατάδεσμος as a synonym for “binding spell”, which he defines in terms of a “form of spell”, the function of which is either to “constrain”, or to “constrain” and “harm” another.<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, a binding spell can take a linguistic form (e.g., formulae that employ cognates of δέω) or a physical form (e.g., a rolled tablet).

Whilst the term κατάδεσμος is still employed in the parlance of contemporary scholarship, the Latin word *defixio* is also well attested in discussions of “curse tablets” and binding spells. For example, in 1897, Wünsch published a collection of Greek curse tablets and binding spells from Attica under the title *Defixionum Tabellae*.<sup>136</sup> This key corpus was followed in 1904 by Audollent’s likewise named work *Defixionum Tabellae*.<sup>137</sup> More recently, Jordan has published a catalogue of a further six hundred and fifty curse tablets and binding spells not listed in either Wünsch’s or Audollent’s corpora, widening further access to the study of Greek and Latin traditions of cursing.

*Defixio* is a rare Latin term derived from *defigo*, meaning “to fasten, fix, set, drive, set up, or plant”.<sup>138</sup> In the study of curse tablets’ and binding spells, *defixio* may have originally referred to the practice of ‘fastening’, or transfixing with a nail, metal tablets

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<sup>134</sup> Gager, *Curse*, 30 n. 1. Many rolled curse tablets have been discovered, the unrolling of which has added a special difficulty to this field of study.

<sup>135</sup> Dickie, *Magic*, 17 (emphasis added).

<sup>136</sup> R. Wünsch, Appendix: “Defixionum Tabellae”, *Inscriptiones Graecae* 3:3 (Berlin, 1897), (hereafter *DTA* and *IG* respectively).

<sup>137</sup> A. Audollent, *Defixionum Tabellae quotquot innotuerunt tam in graecis orientis quam in totius occidentis partibus praeter atticas in corpore inscriptionum atticarum editas* (Paris: Alberti Fontemoing, 1904 [hereafter *DT*]). Another work, which has proved significant in this field, published several decades after Audollent is that of K. Preisendanz, “Die griechischen und lateinischen Zaubertafeln”, *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 9 (1930), 119-154.

<sup>138</sup> C. T. Lewis, Short, C., *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966).



upon which binding spells and curses have been inscribed.<sup>139</sup> The function of the nail is an intriguing matter of debate, born out of the observation that “[i]n just one instance was a nail actually used for its ordinary purpose, to fix a tablet in place.”<sup>140</sup> Possible figurative explanations for this phenomenon have ranged from the use of the nail as a symbolic means of adding physical suffering, to the more persuasive observation that the nail may be a binding action (cf. the rolling of tablets).<sup>141</sup> If this is the case, the terms *defixio* and κατάδεσμος both relate to binding spells:<sup>142</sup>

Defigere refers to the fixing or binding down of the victim symbolized in the piercing of a rolled-up sheet of lead by a nail; it is presumably an attempt at rendering in Latin the Greek verb that gives rise to the nominal forms katadeseis and katadesmoi, namely, katadein.<sup>143</sup>

However, caution must be exercised, for not all extant metal tablets contain “nail holes”.<sup>144</sup> Jordan notes that nails are not used in any Athenian tablet from the Roman period.<sup>145</sup> Furthermore, the link between the nailing down of lead tablets and the term

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<sup>139</sup> Evidence of this practice has emerged from discoveries of tablets that have been fixed down with nails (Jordan, SGD, 182). For example, Gager describes a Grecian lead tablet from Peiraeus, which he dates to the fourth century B.C.E. Gager notes that the tablet was “rolled up and pierced by a nail” (Gager, *Curse*, 124. See also Gager, *Curse*, 157). Other tablets contain pierce holes where a nail has most likely been present (cf. Gager, *Curse*, 172). Gager locates the practice of nailing metal tablets within the wider production process of *defixiones*, an explanation that resonates with Jordan’s understanding of κατάδεσμοι:

Once all of the writing had been completed and the accompanying materials inserted or attached, almost all *defixiones* were rolled or folded; they might also be pierced by one or more nails. Despite their corrodibility, a large number of these sealed and “fixed” tablets have survived intact...their [the nails] universal application tells us that whatever their “original” purpose, they soon became a prescribed part of the process for preparing a *defixio* (Gager, *Curse*, 18).

<sup>140</sup> Gager, *Curse*, 18.

<sup>141</sup> Of course, as a symbol it is possible that both options are simultaneously correct.

<sup>142</sup> Gager, *Curse*, 18.

<sup>143</sup> Dickie, *Magic*, 17.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. Gager, *Curse*, 144.

<sup>145</sup> Gager (*Curse*, 30 n. 1), who recounts a personal conversation with Jordan.

*defixio* is even more historically tenuous, given the absence of evidence from the *GMP*.<sup>146</sup>

Whilst the historical argument for associating *defixio* with the “transfixing” of a metal tablet is not without its difficulties, the contemporary use of *defixio*, like κατάδεσμος, often refers to a binding spell in a linguistic (e.g. formulae that employ cognates of δέω) or physical *form* (e.g. a rolled tablet). Alternatively, it can describe any medium which *functions* to constrain or bind another.

We have defined the term “binding spell”, and explored associated terminology in contemporary discourse. Thus far, we have presented a broadly uniform interpretation of the terms *defixio* and κατάδεσμος which, with qualification, allow the use of these terms in our discussion without opacity. However, difficulties arise in contemporary scholarship due to a division amongst scholars between those who employ these terms in a restricted and in a broad manner. Consider Faraone, who employs *defixio* in a divergent manner from that of epigraphists and archaeologists:

*defixio*...seems to be the preferred terminology among scholars today [for “curse tablet”], although its popularity has led to some inconsistencies. Epigraphists and archaeologists often use it [the term *defixio*] as a synonym for “lead curse tablet,” i.e., any kind of malevolent prayer inscribed upon lead. I shall use the term to refer to all binding rituals regardless of the medium employed, including, e.g., the different kinds of “voodoo dolls,” used in antiquity...or even the bound or twisted bodies of small animals that occasionally accompanied the lead *defixiones*”.<sup>147</sup>

Firstly, Faraone notes that epigraphists and archaeologists employ *defixio* to denote a “lead curse tablet” upon which a curse is inscribed (i.e. a “malevolent prayer”<sup>148</sup>);

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<sup>146</sup> Gager, *Curse*, 37 n. 85.

<sup>147</sup> Faraone, “Context”, 21 n. 3. Faraone fails to note any “inconsistencies”.

<sup>148</sup> Faraone, “Context”, 21 n. 3.



hence, the term ‘curse tablet’. This restricted definition makes no reference to binding spells, which we have thus far accepted as being denoted by scholars’ use of *defixio*. The archaeologists’ and epigraphists’ definition is also at sharp variance with Faraone’s definition of *defixio*, which encompasses a whole spectrum of material.

In contrast to epigraphists’ and archaeologists’ restricted definition of *defixio*—curse tablet—Faraone nuances this term to encompass “all binding rituals regardless of the medium employed.”<sup>149</sup> Thus, unlike the restricted definition, *defixio* now incorporates a range of media. Gager adopts a similar definitional approach to Faraone. For example, in his important work, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World*, Gager uses three terms synonymously—*defixio*, κατάδεσμος, and “tablet”—to denote two terms—“spells and curses”, which appear on a wide range of materials:

We use *defixio* and *katadesmos*—sometimes “tablets”—in the generic sense to designate spells and curses inscribed on a variety of media.<sup>150</sup>

Gager’s use of “tablets” as a “generic” term for “spells and curses inscribed on a variety of media” is especially problematic.<sup>151</sup> The term “tablet” depicts a specific type of medium. As we have seen, in the context of curse tablets it frequently refers to metal, and in particular, lead tablets. “Tablets” cannot, therefore, refer to an unrestricted “variety of media.”

We noted that within contemporary scholarship, the popular terms κατάδεσμος, *defixio*, “binding spell”, and “curse tablet” are employed equivocally and in a contradictory manner, rendering the use of these terms impossible without careful consideration. Two main uses exist which diverge on two key points. Firstly, concerning *medium*, the epigraphists and archaeologists restrict the definition of *defixio*

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<sup>149</sup> Faraone, “Context”, 21 n. 3.

<sup>150</sup> Gager, *Curse*, 30 n. 1.

<sup>151</sup> Gager, *Curse*, 30 n. 1.

to “lead tablets”, whilst other scholars, such as Faraone and Gager, employ an unrestricted definition of *defixio*, which encompasses a wide range of media.

Secondly, whereas epigraphists and archaeologists assess “lead tablets” for evidence of a “curse”, scholars who have an unrestricted definition of *defixio* concern themselves with the presence of “binding spells”.<sup>152</sup> Thus, disagreement exists concerning both the range of the media denoted by the term *defixio*, and how one assesses the content of those media, i.e. for evidence of a “curse” or a “binding spell”. These differences will form the starting point for the establishment of our definition of terms, which will allow us to communicate accurately during our examination of various Greek cursing material.

#### 2.2.1.1 “Curse Tablets” and “Binding Spells”: Constructing a Vocabulary of Cursing

We have seen that the equivocal terms *defixio* and κατάδεσμος are used interchangeably in modern scholarly discourse.<sup>153</sup> We could choose to adopt this terminology following careful definition.<sup>154</sup> However, this approach would merely contribute to the problem caused by the lack of an agreed terminology amongst scholars, by adding another definition of *defixio* and κατάδεσμος to contemporary discourse. Instead, we will refrain from adopting either of these terms in our study.

The argument surrounding restricted and wide-ranging media provides a way forward in our pursuit of a less problematic, and clearer, terminology. The phrase “lead tablet” is materially descriptive, following from an assessment of an object’s external physical

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<sup>152</sup> Cf. Dickie (*Magic*, 17): “The older name for what is the common surviving form of spells of this class is a curse-tablet.”

<sup>153</sup> Cf. part 2.2.1.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. Faraone’s (“Context”, 21 n. 3) and Gager’s (*Curse*, 30 n. 1) working definitions of *defixio* and κατάδεσμος.



composition and appearance. This simple term, employed by archaeologists and epigraphists, is clear and concise. Little confusion arises from the use of the restricted term “lead tablet” (or “metal tablet”). In this case, we will employ the principle of being *materially descriptive* concerning the medium in question. This same approach could be applied to figurines or any other phenomena. A figurine is not a “lead tablet”.<sup>155</sup> As such, it makes little sense to treat figurines and “lead tablets” under one wide-ranging term, such as *defixio*. Therefore, in our consideration of Greek curse phenomena, we will use restricted materially descriptive language: a “lead tablet” will mean a “lead tablet”.

The other key divergence we highlighted between scholars concerned the subjective assessment of their material. Epigraphists and archaeologists assess “lead tablets” for evidence of “curses”,<sup>156</sup> which they define in terms of a “malevolent prayer”;<sup>157</sup> other scholars speak in terms of “binding rituals”.<sup>158</sup>

We have already established a generic definition of “curse” in part 2.1.1: a “curse” denotes a word, form of words, or action that expresses a desire for physical harm to befall another (that is, when “curse” is used transitively) which calls into play a metaphysical power through self-operative, supernatural, or divine agency. The “curse” is thus transformed from an expression of abuse or ill intent, into a potent force for

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<sup>155</sup> Cf. Gager (*Curse*, 86-87) who notes a figurine that has been made from lead. In this instance, the figurine could be described as a lead figurine.

<sup>156</sup> Of course, as Versnel warns, we must not presume that all lead, or metal, tablets are ‘curse tablets’ (Versnel, “Beyond”, 61).

<sup>157</sup> Faraone, “Context”, 21 n. 3. We have already explored imprecatory cursing in part 2.1.4. As we have seen, cursing takes other forms than that of prayer. Therefore, we will not restrict the definition of cursing to ‘malevolent prayer’—imprecation—alone.

<sup>158</sup> Faraone, “Context”, 21 n. 3.

physical harm. This generic definition will aid us in our consideration of Graeco-Roman cursing.

In the following curse, Kardêlos is “handed over” to angelic beings of the underworld (i.e. the supernatural agents who enact the curse) to suffer a variety of graphic torments—and ultimately to death—“within five days”:

(Side A) EULAMÔN restrain. OUSIRI OUSIRI APHI OUSIRI MNE PHRI [I invoke you, holy angels] and archangels by the (one in the) underworld in order that just as *I hand over* [παράθῃ[θου]ε] *to you that impious, lawless and accursed Kardêlos*, to whom his mother Pholgentia gave birth, so *put him on a bed of torment and make him suffer the penalty of an evil death and expire within five days*. Quickly, quickly! The spell [Λό[γος]]: To you, Phrygian goddess and Nymph goddess and EIDONEA NEOIEKATOIKOUSE, I invoke you by your [names]...in order that you lend a hand and restrain and hold back Kardêlos, to whom his mother Pholgentia gave birth; and make him bedridden and (make him) suffer the penalty of an evil death and come to his end in a bad condition. And you, holy EULAMÔN and holy charaktêres and holy assistants, those on the right and on the left, and holy Symphonia, who are written down on this tablet [taken from a water conduit]—EULAMÔN restrain OUSIRI OUSIRI API OUSIRI MNE PHRI—in order that just as *I hand over to you* [παραδείδουμε] *this impious, accursed [ἐπικατάρατος], and miserable Kardêlos*, to whom his mother Pholgentia gave birth, bound, fully bound, and altogether bound, in order that you may in the same way restrain him—Kardêlos to whom his mother Pholgentia gave birth—and make him bedridden and (make him) suffer the penalty of an evil death and expire within five days—Kardêlos to whom his mother Pholgentia gave birth. For I invoke you [ὀρκίζω] by the one who grows young, under the Earth, and restrains the circles (of the Zodiac) and OIMÊNEBENCHUCH BACHUCH BACHACHUCH BAZACHUCH BACHAZACHUCH BACHAXICHUCH BADÊGOPHÔTHPHTHÔSIRÔ. And I invoke you holy angel.<sup>159</sup>

This elaborate curse, dated to the end of the fourth century CE,<sup>160</sup> is, as we will demonstrate, in continuity with previous centuries of Greek cursing tradition. A plain reading of the text reveals a desire for physical harm to befall another. As such, this text which is contained on a metal tablet can be labelled a “curse tablet”. However, Gager challenges a literal interpretation of this curse. Instead, he argues for what he considers to be a more nuanced reading, which interprets an apparent desire for physical harm to befall another metaphorically:<sup>161</sup>

<sup>159</sup> Gager, *Curse*, 70-71 (DT 155:A1-44).

<sup>160</sup> Gager, *Curse*, 67.

<sup>161</sup> Gager, *Curse*, 22.





We know that all defixiones express a formalized wish to bring other persons or animals under the client's power, against their will and customarily without their knowledge. In some cases, the wish is expressed as an intention to inflict personal harm and death...But how are we to take these "wishes" and who is the real audience of the invocations? Once again, the tendency among interpreters has been to read them literally. Here we might begin with our own forms of cursing. What do we mean when we blurt out, "Screw you!"? Is this an expression of our desire for sexual intercourse? When we hear team-mates or sports fans shout, "Kill the bum!", do we load our rifles?<sup>162</sup>

Gager draws upon the work of Tambiah to further articulate his position. Specifically, Gager argues that curses and spells are directed "primarily to the *human* participants in all ritual action".<sup>163</sup> Secondly, "verbal speech-forms", such as those in spells and curses, are a linguistic feature of human communication, which express "metaphorical aspects of human experience".<sup>164</sup> On consideration, Gager's argument fails for it does not take sufficient account of the open supernatural universe of the ancient world in which this curse was conceived.<sup>165</sup>

If we are to interpret the language of harm and suffering literally,<sup>166</sup> how then are we to understand the plethora of erotic spells and effigies, whose object is to secure the affection of another?<sup>167</sup> Faraone makes a teleological distinction between "Greek

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<sup>162</sup> Gager, *Curse*, 21.

<sup>163</sup> Gager, *Curse*, 22.

<sup>164</sup> Gager, *Curse*, 22.

<sup>165</sup> Whereas the modern curse "damn you", that is "damnation for you", expresses ill-intent, it contains a very different force when it is uttered within a mythological worldview in which damnation, or hell, is a reality. For a further discussion of this point, see part 2.1.1.

<sup>166</sup> This is different from interpreting the whole text literally. For example, we have already interpreted the language of binding figuratively. Furthermore, as we will note in 2.2.1, other language is used metaphorically. As Gager notes, curse tablets evidence a wealth of literary devices and forms such as "repetition, pleonasm, metaphor and simile, personification, rhythmic phrases, exaggeration, threats, promises, prayers and formal appeals" (Gager, *Curse*, 13). These literary observations, however, do not commend a figurative interpretation of the language of physical harm in these curse texts.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. Gager, *Curse*, 98-100. On the interpretation of figurines, cf. C. A. Faraone, "Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil: The Defensive Use of 'Voodoo Dolls' in Ancient Greece", *Classical Antiquity* 10 (1991), 165-205.

curses” and “erotic spells”.<sup>168</sup> Curses seek death, whilst erotic spells seek submission from the target of the spell:

On a strictly formal basis, then, the techniques of many forms of erotic magic are quite indistinguishable from those of hostile curses used against enemies or of self-curses used in especially fearful oaths. Although this might trouble our own modern and romantic view of the positive and humanizing nature of erotic passion, the regular compatibility of erotic spell and curse is indeed—as we have seen repeatedly—perfectly harmonious with traditional Greek views of erotic seizure as a hostile demonic attack of the sort that results in deadly disease. There is, however, one important difference between common Greek curses and erotic spells: the former torture their victims with fever or pain until they die, while the latter do so only until they yield.<sup>169</sup>

Faraone is correct insofar as the author of a spell who jealously seeks to constrain another solely for his own sexual gratification is not seeking to kill the target of the spell.<sup>170</sup> The problem with Faraone’s definitional approach is that it cannot label phenomena outside the realm of “erotic spells” that evidence a desire for harm to befall another as a “curse” (i.e. if death is not the ultimate goal).

We can account for this problem by considering varying degrees of malevolence. Faraone does not deny malevolence in erotic spells, as is clear from his literal interpretation of the physical suffering which these spells exact upon a victim. Again, as we noted, according to Faraone erotic spells, “torture their victims with fever or pain...until they yield”.<sup>171</sup> It could be argued that these spells are indeed curses. They may not seek death, but they do call into play self-operative, or supernatural, agency in order to bring physical harm upon another. How, then, are we to understand binding spells, which, it is suggested, seek to constrain alone without inflicting physical harm?

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<sup>168</sup> Cf. Gager who similarly argues that “Whatever else one might say about such puzzling ‘sex objects’ found with defixiones, it is important to emphasize that they were not curses and were not always intended to harm the target” (Gager, *Curse*, 15).

<sup>169</sup> C. A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 55.

<sup>170</sup> Although, desire has the potential to be translated into violence, or tragedy.

<sup>171</sup> Faraone, *Love Magic*, 55.



Formulae that express a desire to constrain, which are called into play by self-operative or supernatural agency are in evidence amongst the oldest extant metal tablets. For example, the following fourth century B.C.E. binding formula may be located within the context of a court dispute in which the author seeks to prevent speech:

(*Side A*)  
I bind, I bind  
Astuphiloas  
of Halai and Pha[n]ias  
the tongue

(*Side B*)  
and the soul.<sup>172</sup>

Whilst no physical harm is explicitly sought in this binding formula, a physical consequence is desired: the tongue is to be “bound”, preventing Astuphiloas from speaking in court. The binding spell is undoubtedly malevolent, and it seeks a malevolent physical effect (loss of speech, or incoherent speech). As such, caution is required in the evaluation of this, and other such, binding spells. On other occasions, binding language is employed within the context of cursing—in which physical harm, beyond mere restraint, is intended. We will refer to such formulae as “binding curses”.

In retrospect, we have considered a well-attested form of Greek cursing in evidence on curse tablets. In preparation for our more detailed study of this phenomenon, we noted the terminological murkiness that has eroded the clarity of scholarly discussion in this field (cf. part 2.2.1). Rather than contribute to this confusion, we sought to establish our own materially descriptive terminology (in part 2.2.1.1). Furthermore, this necessary preparatory work afforded us the opportunity to consider further some examples of Greek cursing and binding spells. Having clarified our vocabulary of cursing, in our ensuing discussion we will consider the particular, formulaic, language of Greek

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<sup>172</sup> Gager, *Curse*, 150.

cursing. This more specialised study will form an important part of our examination of 1 Corinthians 5:5 in part 3 (and in particular, part 3.4.2.4).

## 2.2.2 'Technical' and 'Legal' Binding (Curse) Formulae

Like cursing in Tanakh, Greek cursing takes a variety of forms.<sup>173</sup> In this part, we will focus upon the use of “legal” and “technical” binding curse formulae, prompted by Deissmann’s suggestion that the language of 1 Corinthians 5:4-5 is to be understood as a “technical” expression “adopted from the ritual of cursing.”<sup>174</sup> More precisely, Deissmann conceives of an “execration”—which he defines as the “devoting [of] a person to the gods of the lower world”.<sup>175</sup> Whilst Deissmann draws primarily upon the presence of παραδίδωμι in the *GMP*,<sup>176</sup> the formulaic use of παραδίδωμι<sup>177</sup> occurs more frequently in curse tablets than in the *Greek Magical Papyri*.<sup>178</sup> Thus, in this part, we will examine Deissmann’s claims by examining the formulae employing παραδίδωμι in the context of cursing.

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<sup>173</sup> Consider the following curse, discovered near Hebron (Palestine), dated to the third to fifth century CE, which takes a markedly different form to binding curses:

I invoke you charaktês to lay Eusebios low, to whom the pious mother Megalê gave birth, with suffering and injury; cast him into a fever. Lay him low with suffering and death and headaches. Quickly, quickly, now, now! (Gager, *Curse*, 203).

<sup>174</sup> Deissmann, *Light*, 301-302 (Cf. part 1.1.3).

<sup>175</sup> Deissmann, *Light*, 302.

<sup>176</sup> We will consider the *GMP* in part 2.4.

<sup>177</sup> For the appearance of various forms of παραδίδωμι in curse tablets from Rome, see *DT* 156:8 for παραδίδω; 161:35. See *DT* 155:30 for παραδείδουμε. See *DT* 163:66 for Audollent’s reconstruction of πα[ραδί]δομε. These few references are drawn from *DT*, which was known to Deissmann.

<sup>178</sup> We will examine the use of παραδίδωμι in the *GMP* in part 2.4.



Faraone nuances binding spells in terms of “literal”, “technical”, and “legal” formulae.<sup>179</sup>

(1) literal binding (verbs compounded with δέω) and (2) verbs with technical or legal connotations that either “register” the victims before an imagined underworld tribunal (i.e., compounds of γράφω) or those that simply “consign” the victims to the control of the chthonic deities (i.e., compounds of τίθημι and δίδωμι).<sup>180</sup>

Whereas the verb of binding in a “literal binding” formula (such as “[Κα]ταδῶ Θε[ο]δώρα[ν] πρὸς [τ]ῇ[ν] παρὰ Φε[ρρε]φάττη<sup>181</sup>) can be translated literally as ‘I bind’, “technical” and “legal” language requires a different nuance. The most common “technical” and “legal” verbs<sup>182</sup> are καταδίδωμι, παραδίδωμι (compounds of δίδωμι), and καταγράφω (a compound of γράφω).<sup>183</sup>

As we will demonstrate, other “technical” and “legal” terms function like παραδίδωμι.<sup>184</sup> As such, a larger pool of evidence exists for consideration if we extend Deissmann’s argument beyond the use of parallel phraseology (of which παραδίδωμι is the verbal component) to look also at similar functioning

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<sup>179</sup> Faraone, modifying Kagarow’s (E. Kagarow, *Griechische Fluchtafeln* (Leipzig, 1929), 28-34) five-fold categorisation of curse tablet formulae, constructs four broad groups.

<sup>180</sup> Faraone, “Context”, 24 n. 24. Cf. Kagarow (*Griechische*, 27) who uses the terms “unmittelbaren Zauberei” or direct magic and “indirekte Zauberei” or indirect magic (*Griechische*, 28). Kagarow describes his use of this latter term as follows: “dass der Mensch sich an die Hilfe der Geister oder Götter wendet, denen er sein Opfer überantwortet (ἀνατίθημι, παρατίθημι, κατατίθημι, παραδίδωμι)” (*Griechische*, 29).

<sup>181</sup> *DT* 68A:1-2. In his comments upon *DT* 68, Audollent remarks that “τὴν παρὰ Φερρεφάττη=’Εκάτην” (notes on *DT* 68A:1-2).

<sup>182</sup> Faraone, “Context”, 24 n. 24.

<sup>183</sup> For the appearance of καταγράφω in curse tablets from Achaia, cf. *DT* 41: A4, B10-11; 47:4, 6, 8; 74:1, 7-8, 10; 75: A1; 76:1; 84: A5, 9, 17. For Epirus, cf. *DT* 87: 3, 5, 7, 8, 9-10.

<sup>184</sup> Cf. F. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World* (trans. F. Philip; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 125; *DT*, vii-viii. Cf. Jordan who argues that παραδέξασθε (SGD 120) functions in the same manner as παραδίδωμι ὑμῖν (D. R. Jordan, “Two Inscribed Lead Tablets from a Well in the Athenian Kerameikos”, *Mitteilungen Des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Athenische Abteilung* 95 [1980], 225-239 at 237 [hereafter TILT]). Faraone shares Jordan’s assessment (“Agonistic”, 31 n. 85).

terminology.<sup>185</sup> For example, we will consider the function of παραδίδωμι (in part 2.2.2.1), καταγράφω (in part 2.2.2.2), κατατίθημι, ἀνατίθημι, ἀνιερῶ, and παραθίτομαι (in part 2.2.2.3),<sup>186</sup> and *dono*, *mando*, and *trado* (in part 2.2.2.4).

### 2.2.2.1 Παραδίδωμι

Παραδίδωμι features frequently as the verb of binding on lead tablets discovered at Roman well five (of eight) on the Southwest corner of the Athenian Agora.<sup>187</sup> Of seventeen extant tablets, fourteen were decipherable. Jordan dates these curse tablets from the second half of the first century through to the first half of the third century CE.<sup>188</sup> We will consider the use of παραδίδωμι in this setting by focussing upon the narrative context of this term. In the text of the following lead tablet, a wrestler named Eutychian, the son of Eutychia, is the stated victim:

(‘Borphor’ syllables [Βωρφορβαβαρβ[ο]ρ[β]αβα[ρφο]ρβαβορβορβαιη]) –babaie, mighty Betpyt, I hand over to you Eutychian [παραδίδωμί σοι Εὐτυχιανόν], whom Eutychia bore, that you may chill him and his purposes, and in your dark air also those with him. Bind [δέω] in the unilluminated aiōn of oblivion and chill and destroy also the wrestling that he is going to do in the...this coming Friday. And if he does wrestle, in order that he may fall and disgrace himself, Mozoune Alcheine Perpertharona Iaia, I hand over to you Eutychian [παραδίδω(μ)ί (σοι) Εὐτυχιανόν] whom Eutychia bore. Mighty Typhon Kolchoi Tontonon Seth Sathaoch Ea, Lord Apomx Phriourinx over the blacking out and the chilling of Eutychian, whom Eutychia bore, Kolchoicheilops, let Eutychian grow cold and not be strong this coming Friday, but let him be weak. As these names grow cold, so let Eutychian grow cold, whom Eutychia bore, whom Aithales promotes.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> In addition to drawing a “parallel” between the use of παραδίδωμι (a key verbal feature of the phrase ‘deliver unto Satan’) in the Greek Magical Papyri (*PGM* 5:335) and 1 Corinthians 5, Deissmann (*Light*, 302) also focuses upon the occurrence of the particle σὺν in both the Greek Magical Papyri (*PGM* 5:334f) and 1 Corinthians 5:4.

<sup>186</sup> A term employed in curse tablet formulae.

<sup>187</sup> Jordan, “Agora”, 205.

<sup>188</sup> Jordan, “Agora”, 209. If Jordan’s dating is correct, these tablets may be contemporaneous with the Pauline epistles.

<sup>189</sup> Inv. No. IL 950: lines 1-18 as translated by Jordan, “Agora”, 215.



The unnamed author seeks a decline in his victim's (Eutychian's) physical strength in order to prevent him from competing in a forthcoming wrestling competition. This agonistic binding curse<sup>190</sup> seeks to cause Eutychian "to fall and disgrace himself",<sup>191</sup> which may follow from the decline in his physical strength. To this end, the chthonic deity Betpyt is explicitly named as the subject of the formula following the opening Borphor syllables.<sup>192</sup> This is followed by the common verbal construction of παραδίδωμι, the personal pronoun σοι, and the named object or victim of this formula, Eutychian:<sup>193</sup> "I hand over to you Eutychian."

Jordan's translation of παραδίδωμί σοι Εὐτυχιανόν is uncontroversial.

Παραδίδωμι, a compound of the preposition παρά and the common verb δίδωμι, has

<sup>190</sup> Cf. Jordan ("Agora", 213) who rightly labels this a "curse".

<sup>191</sup> Versnel, in his study of "curse texts and schadenfreude", persuasively argues that it is a loss of honour that is the "hidden agenda behind the stereotyped wishes that rivals in the amphitheatre may fall or veer off...The opponent must 'make a fool of himself' and thus suffer humiliation in his sad rôle as a laughing-stock of the public" (Versnel, "Punish", 150). The "disgrace" wished upon Eutychian is a humiliating loss of honour (Versnel, "Punish", 156).

<sup>192</sup> Jordan ("Agora", 241) offers an explanation of the Borphor syllables as "merely representations of outlandish sounds (cf. βαρβαρίζω "speak gibberish", βορβορίζω "rumble") and in their emphasis on the strange and the possibly frightening may have been thought equally suitable for any destructive deity likely to be invoked in magic."

<sup>193</sup> The use of παραδίδωμί σοι appears frequently on curse tablets from well 5. For example, Inv. no. IL 960:2, 10 (Jordan, "Agora", 216); Inv. no. IL 957:1, 9 (Jordan, "Agora", 217); Inv. no. IL 956:2, 14 (Jordan, "Agora", 218); Inv. no. IL 955:1, 7 (Jordan, "Agora", 220); Inv. no. IL 958:3, 18 (Jordan, "Agora", 221); Inv. no. IL 1000:2, 11 (Jordan, "Agora", 223); Inv. no. IL 948 and 949:1, 10 (Jordan, "Agora", 225); Inv. no. IL 948 & 949:1-2, 10 (Jordan, "Agora", 225); Inv. no. IL 952:2, 8 (Jordan, "Agora", 227); Inv. no. IL 953:1 (Jordan, "Agora", 232); Inv. no. IL 951:3 (Jordan, "Agora", 248); Inv. no. IL 1737:1 (Jordan, "Agora", 252); Inv. no. IL 72; Inv. no. 1440—IL 72 (G. W. Elderkin, "An Athenian Maledictory Inscription on Lead", *Hesperia*, 5:1 (1936), 43-49 at 45 [IL 372]). Consider also δίδωμί σοι in Inv. no. IL 954: line 8 (Jordan, "Agora", 250). For more general occurrences of cognates of παραδίδωμί, cf. [ῶ]σπερα ὑμῖν παραδείδουμε (DT 155A:29-30); εἶνα ὥσπερ ὑμῖν παραδείδω Ἀδευδάτον τὸν υἱὸν Κρησκωνίας (DT 156:7-9); παραδίδωμι τοῖς καταχθονίοις θεοῖς τοῦτο τὸ ἥρῳιον φυλάσσειν (IG 2.2: 13209, 13210; I. Cret. 2(16), 28 (Jordan, "Agora", 241); παραδείδω/ [μί σοι (?)] (Jordan, "Agora", 241). There are a number of reconstructed texts in which cognates of παραδίδωμί are envisioned: DT 155:30; 161:35; 163:66; παραδίδω Ὀνήσιμον. / τοῦτον ἀπάγετε μαρε/νόμενον ὑπὸ χθόνα (Jordan, "New", no. 59); Jordan, "New", no. 82 (ἐνδίδ[η]/μι); Ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ κα[ῖ] ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐμῶν τοῖς κατὰ Ἀθην δίδωμι, παραδίδωμι Νεικίαν καὶ Τειμήν καὶ τοὺς ἄ[λ]λους οἷς δικαίως κατηρασά μην (no. 89). Jordan notes that side B is "[s]imilar, in Latin" (no. 89). DT 38:22 contains "seize him and deliver him [παραδοῖτε ἄωροις] to the untimely dead". Cf. *Supplementum Magicum* 2:54:22, *Papyrologica Coloniensia* 16.2, R. W. Daniel and F. Maltomini ed. and trans.; (Opladen: Westdeutscher, 1992), 18-19 (hereafter *Suppl. Mag.* 2).



the root meaning of “to give” (from the stem δίδωμι), ‘to hand over to another’, or to ‘transmit’.<sup>194</sup> This term is readily intelligible when it is translated with reference to the stem δίδωμι (meaning ‘to give’) in terms of handing over to another. However, the interpretation of this term requires discussion.

Faraone rightly notes that παραδίδωμι is a technical term, similar in nature to καταγράφω (which we will consider in part 2.2.2.2). As such, παραδίδωμι should not be understood literally: Eutychian is not physically transported to Betpyt’s domain.<sup>195</sup> Instead, Faraone correctly states παραδίδωμι denotes a committal to “the domain of the god’s jurisdiction and influence”;<sup>196</sup> Eutychian is handed over, or “placed under” Beypyt’s “control”:

[Legal or technical terms] refer in an abstract way to the domain of the god’s jurisdiction and influence. An inscribed lead tablet from Crete, dated to the imperial period, provides an interesting parallel: “I hand over (Παραδίδωμι) this gravestone to the gods of the underworld to guard.” Two nearly identical statements appear directly on two Attic grave steles of comparable date (IG II<sup>2</sup> 13209-10) and seem to confirm the usage; the gravestones are placed under the control of the underworld gods, not literally “sent to the underworld” or destroyed. What is so illustrative about the Cretan example is the fact that the transfer was inscribed on a lead document separate from the gravestone itself and then placed nearby or buried beneath it as a sort of “legal writ of cession.”<sup>197</sup>

Faraone’s example is helpful. In the context of the above discussion, παραδίδωμι is not to be understood as a physical transaction: the gravestone is not physically

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<sup>194</sup> *LSJ*, 1:1. Other meanings add to the semantic range of this term, a selection of which are: “to give a city or person into another’s hands” (*LSJ*, 1:2), “to give up to justice” (*LSJ*, 1:3), “to hand down legends” (*LSJ*, 1:4), “to teach doctrine” (*LSJ*, 1:4b).

<sup>195</sup> To interpret παραδίδωμι in terms of a physical transfer is to render many curse narratives unintelligible (cf. agonistic spells in which the physical removal of a competitor is not envisioned).

<sup>196</sup> Καταδίδωμι functions in a similar technical manner to παραδίδωμι: cf. *DT* 69:1 A4, 8, B1, 3; 69: 2 A2, B5; 81: A2; 84 A10; καταδίδημι παρὰ καταχθονίοισι θεοῖσι (D. R. Jordan, “Two Curse Tablets from Lilybaeum”, *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 38 [1997], 387-396 at 388. Cf. Jordan, “Two”, 387-396 at 389, 390); Jordan, “New”, no. 78 (καταδίδημι).

<sup>197</sup> Faraone, “Context”, 10 (emphasis added). Faraone (“Context”, 27 n. 44) here cites 1-Cret. 2 (17) 28.



translated from the human to chthonic realm.<sup>198</sup> Instead, the technical use of παραδίδωμι indicates that the gravestone is to be placed under the “control of the underworld gods”.

Once the chthonic deities are in control of the gravestone, they are entrusted with guarding it. Thus, Faraone is correct to conclude that παραδίδωμι does not denote “destruction” in *this* context. However, it is important to note that there is nothing intrinsic about the technical use of παραδίδωμι that precludes a desire for “destruction” to befall a victim in a wider context (different from the one above).<sup>199</sup> In contrast to the above example, a human victim could have been placed under the control of a chthonic deity in order to be destroyed, and not guarded. Thus, it is the wider context in which παραδίδωμι functions that qualifies the purpose for which a person or thing is given over to chthonic control—be it to guard, or to destroy.

Versnel strongly resists the idea that a human victim who has been “handed over” becomes an automaton—a human puppet under the “control” of the chthonic puppet master: παραδίδωμι is not to be understood as automatic control, that is “a kind of

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<sup>198</sup> Παραδίδωμι features on another funerary curse from Nikaia (*I. Nikaia* I.87): ὃς ἂν δὲ εἰς τοῦτο | τὸ μνημεῖον δόλον | πονηρὸν πυήσει, πα[ρ]αδίδωμι αὐτὸν θεο[ῖ]||ς καταχθονίοις (2-5), “whoever performs any wicked treachery against this tomb, I hand him over to the infernal gods” (G. H. R. Horsley, “73. παραδίδωμι”, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity: A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri published in 1979* [vol. 4, Marrickville, Southwood Press: 1987], 165). For a discussion of Greek funerary curses, cf. J. H. M. Strubbe, “Cursed be he that moves my bones” in C. A. Faraone, D. Obbink (eds), *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic & Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 33-59.

<sup>199</sup> Cf. Jordan (TILT, 237) who, *contra* Nabers, rightly argues that whilst παραδίδωμι may have a “benevolent” sense in certain contexts, it can “also have malevolent senses and may in fact occur in curses or threats”. Jordan cites 1 Corinthians 5:5 as an example of such a malevolent use of παραδίδωμι.

holy slavery”.<sup>200</sup> Instead, he favours translating παραδίδωμι as “entrusted” or “committed”.<sup>201</sup>

In support of Versnel’s argument, an understanding of παραδίδωμι in terms of automatic control is discordant with the context of some curses. In the curse tablet we have been considering, Eutychian is “handed over” to Betpyt in order to weaken and prevent him from making a wrestling competition: “chill and destroy also the wrestling that he is going to do...this coming Friday.” Rather than the assumption that this curse will be effective due to Betpyt’s total control over Eutychian, the curse continues: “And if he does wrestle...”.<sup>202</sup> The possibility for failure militates against understanding “hand over” in terms of automatic control.<sup>203</sup> Thus, we will understand the technical use παραδίδωμι as referring to “the domain of the god’s jurisdiction and influence.”<sup>204</sup> In the following binding curse “Tyche” is entrusted to the jurisdiction and influence of “Mighty Typhon” in order to be cursed:<sup>205</sup>

Mighty Typhon, I hand over to you Tyche [παραδίδωμί σοι Τύχην], whom Sophia bore, that you may do her harm and - - - her - - -, her strength, capacity, sinews, muscles, breath, - - -, all members in your dark air. <Bind [Δῆς] into> the unilluminated aiôn of oblivion and - - - Tyche, whom Sophia bore, until she becomes weak. - - -eian Ia Iao Iakoubia Iae Bolchoseth Io- - - Iomalthalal[?] ps Ekebenneu Ekeuthi Neuthi Iao Iae Ioseth Anebeth Abbrasax Iasai Phaithon Toubria - - -orith Tonorma Aoche Aschephar Tethou Athaphelami Tateimiata Tloe (?) Iartar Iartarmorzouche Morzoune Karmane Dacheine Pepertharora Iaia Acheraira, I give you Tyche [δίδωμί σοι Τύχην], whom Sophia bore, the aforementioned, whose hairs these are, rolled up. Yes, mighty Typhon Kolchloi Totlith Seth Basaoth Aea Anoch Apomps Osesero Apoikailemour- - - Ormerpheriarbarmaphriourinx over the

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<sup>200</sup> Versnel, “Beyond”, 73.

<sup>201</sup> Versnel, “Beyond”, 73.

<sup>202</sup> Inv. No. IL 950: line 8 (Jordan, “Agora”, 215).

<sup>203</sup> Cf. Inv. No. IL 955: line 6 (Jordan, “Agora”, 219), Inv. No. IL 960: line 8 (Jordan, “Agora”, 216), Inv. No. IL 957: line 8 (Jordan, “Agora”, 217), Inv. No. IL 1000: line 10 (Jordan, “Agora”, 223).

<sup>204</sup> Faraone, “Context”, 9.

<sup>205</sup> Unlike a direct binding formulae (e.g. containing καταδῶ), Faraone rightly notes that technical and legal formulae signal a shift in agency: the “responsibility” for the binding (curse) is shifted to “the divine sphere of activity” (Faraone, “Context”, 5).



blackening out and chilling of Tyche, whom Sophia bore, whose hairs these are, here rolled up. Yes, mighty Typhon Chocheilops Iao Iakoubia Ioerbeth Bolchoseth Basoucha Phatha Thnacha - - -roserros, let Tyche whom Sophia bore, whom I have inscribed on the tablet, grow cold and not walk about. Yes, mighty Typhon - - -e Bagel - -npho- - -ri Sontorneth - - - in the well - - - of earth and heaven - - -. Bind, twist - - - the strength, the capacity, - - -, the joints, make her lungs disappear - - - of the abdomen, (i.e.) of Tyche, whom Sophia bore, grow cold, that she may no longer rise up, walk around, talk, move about, but let her remain a corpse, pale, weak, paralysed, chilled until I am taken out of the dark air, rather let her grow exhausted and weak until she dies. Yes, mighty Typhon.<sup>206</sup>

In this binding curse, the various aspects of the victim's health and body are targeted:

“her strength, capacity, sinews, muscles, breath...the strength, the capacity, - - -, the joints, make her lungs disappear”. Jordan summarises the purpose of this curse: “Tyche is to remain enfeebled until her death and until the curser himself is taken up out of the dark air, i.e. until he transcends the present world.”<sup>207</sup>

Our exploration of the technical meaning of παραδίδωμι reveals a weakness in Deissmann's definition of this term. Whilst his understanding of this term as an “execration”—that is the “devoting [of] a person to the gods of the lower world”—is not in error;<sup>208</sup> it is not sufficiently nuanced. Firstly, he fails to explain what it means to “devote” a victim to the chthonic deities. Furthermore, he neglects to explain the link between this binding phraseology and cursing. This lack of an adequate exposition undermines his interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5:5. Having more extensively considered the technical meaning of παραδίδωμι in binding curses, we are in a position to more effectively reformulate a curse interpretation of verse five (in part three).

In retrospect, παραδίδωμι functions as a technical term in binding spells and binding curses. Rather than a physical transfer, or a call for destruction, in this context, this

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<sup>206</sup> Inv. No. IL 1737 (Jordan, “Agora”, 253).

<sup>207</sup> Jordan, “Agora”, 242.

<sup>208</sup> Deissmann, *Light*, 302.

term denotes the entrusting of a human victim or inanimate object to the realm of a chthonic deity addressed. As such, a shift in agency occurs; it is now the specific deity who is to carry out the wider specified wish of the text—be that to guard or inflict physical harm.

### 2.2.2.2 Καταγράφω

The term καταγράφω<sup>209</sup> contains a surprising range of potential nuances: “register” or “record”,<sup>210</sup> “enrol”,<sup>211</sup> “summon by a written order”,<sup>212</sup> “convey” or “transfer by deed”,<sup>213</sup> or “devote to the infernal gods”.<sup>214</sup> In the context of binding formulae, scholars have noted that καταγράφω contains a “legal” meaning which has no “explicit emphasis on the basic meaning of the stem, e.g. ‘register’, ‘summon’, or ‘accuse.’”<sup>215</sup> For example, consider the following Sicilian curse tablet, which has been assigned a provisional date of 475-450 BCE:<sup>216</sup>

(Part A) I record [κα{κα}ταγράφω] Apelos, (son) of Lukinos<sup>217</sup> with the holy goddess, along with his life and power/strength; and also Lukinos, the son of Lukinos, the son of Halos, and his brother. And (I record) with the holy goddess this one, Nauerotos, the son of Halos, and...otulos (the son) of Tamiras and their sons. And Saris and Apelos and Romis

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<sup>209</sup> Cf. *DT* 74; *DT* 75 A:1-5; *DT* 76:1; 84 A:5, 9, 17; *DT* 87: 3, 5, 7, 8, 9-10; SGD 64; D. R. Jordan, “New Greek Curse Tablets (1985-2000), *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 41 (2000), 5-46 at 12 (#23. Hereafter we will use the inventory number [e.g. #23]); Jordan, “New”, #38.

<sup>210</sup> *LSJ* 2:2.

<sup>211</sup> *LSJ* 2:2.

<sup>212</sup> *LSJ* 2:3.

<sup>213</sup> *LSJ* 2:4.

<sup>214</sup> *LSJ* 2:5.

<sup>215</sup> Faraone, “Context”, 24 n. 20. Cf. Jordan (“New”, #46): “Mentions of δικαστάς (B 4), συνδ[ίκων (Δ2) imply lawsuit. Καταγράφω recurs; Jordan “New”, #64; #66 (καταγ[ρ]άφο).

<sup>216</sup> Gager, *Curse*, 139.

<sup>217</sup> “In the upper part, the text begins [”Α]πελον τὸν Λυκίνο κα{κα}ταγράφω...The curse is then repeated six times, with ellipses, variations, and (so I assume) mistakes, for other victims, likewise qualified with their fathers’ names” (SGD, 107).



(son) of Kailios, (I record) with the holy goddess, and his/their (?) sons and Saris, the son of Purinos and (also) Puros. With the holy goddess (I record) Puros and the sons of Rotulos (the son) of Puros—with the holy goddess—both their power/strength and their tongues. Plakitas (son) of Nannelasios and Halos (son) of Pukeleios, I record their life with the holy goddess and also their power/strength. Kadosis (son) of Matulaios and Ekotis (son) of Magôn, I record their life with the holy goddess. And the son of Phoinix (son) of Kailios, I record/register with the holy goddess.<sup>218</sup>

Apelos, to take the first mentioned person, is “recorded”, “registered”, or “enrolled” (καταγράφω) with the “holy goddess”.<sup>219</sup> This puzzling sentence is elaborated further to include the “recording” of Apelos’ “life and power/strength”. This same formulaic structure: the verb of binding (καταγράφω) an object (Apelos), and an indirect object (holy goddess) is found in other formulae in which καταγράφω features.

The act of “registering” (καταγράφω) Apelos, and others, with the “holy goddess” is understood by scholars, such as Gager, to function in a similar manner to παραδίδωμι; it envisions a transfer “to the realm or to the authority of the holy goddess”:<sup>220</sup>

The verb...katagraphein...has the sense of transferring something or someone by the act of recording the person’s name under a new heading, in this case the heading of the gods being invoked.<sup>221</sup>

Scholars have noted the “legalistic ring” to this registration process.<sup>222</sup> Faraone argues that καταγράφω evokes the metaphor of a courtroom or “tribunal” in which the victim—or accused—has been summoned to attend. As Faraone states, “verbs with

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<sup>218</sup> Gager, *Curse*, 140. The second part of the tablet continues with a list of the names of those whose life is to come under the supernatural influence of the “holy goddess”:

(Part B) Apelos (son) of Lukinos, Lukinos (son) of Puros, Nannelaios, Ekotis (son) of Magôn, Halos (son) of Pukeleios, Romis (son) of Kailios, Apelos (son) of Phoinix, Titelos (son) of Phoinix, Atos (son) of Naueraidas, Titelos (son) of Nannelaios, Saris (son) of Romis. (Gager, *Curse*, 141).

<sup>219</sup> Gager, *Curse*, 140.

<sup>220</sup> Gager, *Curse*, 140 n. 84.

<sup>221</sup> Gager, *Curse*, 182 n. 2.

<sup>222</sup> S. I. Johnston, “Songs for the ghosts: Magical solutions to deadly problems”, *Ancient Magic*,

technical or legal connotations...‘register’ the victims before an imagined underworld tribunal (i.e., compounds of γράφω).”<sup>223</sup> Thus, in the above curse, καταγράφω suggests that a legal registration is to take place.<sup>224</sup> Punishment may be meted out as if by a human court as Apelos, among others, is “recorded” or “registered” (καταγράφω) before the “holy goddess”.<sup>225</sup> The curse carries all the weight and authority of a legal edict. Legal terms of cursing emphasise the context of judgment—tribunal and punishment. The victim is pronounced guilty before a divine trial and consigned to punishment at the hand of the gods.

Unsurprisingly, given the legal nuance of καταγράφω, this verb of binding features frequently on lead tablets that concern “pleas for justice and revenge” in which they seek to bring thieves to justice.<sup>226</sup>

The verbs of binding—to register (katagraphein) and to consign, hand over or transfer (katatithenai)—are common in texts of this sort [“Pleas for Justice and Revenge”]. The affairs of the target are placed under the temporary control of the deities invoked so that the desired result may follow...the registering and transferring of the unknown thieves to infernal deities must mean that they, rather than human judges, will mete out the punishment.<sup>227</sup>

The following lead tablet discovered in Megara, Greece, dated by Wünsch to the first or second century C.E., contains a distinctly Jewish flavour. It is also of interest as

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83-102 at 85-86.

<sup>223</sup> Faraone, “Context”, 24 n. 24.

<sup>224</sup> Cf. Johnston, who maintains that the deities were supposed to take “note of the registration and then set in motion the proper chain of events to effect the curse” (Johnston, “Songs”, 83-102 at 85-86).

<sup>225</sup> Graf notes that unlike “the simple action of ‘binding’ aimed at the victim, there are verbs [such as καταγράφω, which he cites [Graf, *Magic*, 125]] that seek to define a relationship between the victim and a divinity: one ‘dedicates’ a man to a particular superhuman being, ‘registers’ him in the god’s world” (Graf, *Magic*, 126).

<sup>226</sup> We are following Gager’s designation (*Curse*, 175-199).

<sup>227</sup> Gager, *Curse*, 181-182.



καταγράφω features in the first person plural, demonstrating that binding curses on lead tablets were not always carried out by an individual:

(Side A) ZÔAPHER TON THALLASSOSÊMON SEKNTÊAPAPHONOC HAI the beloved child Panaitios inscribed (here?) ECHAOPEN...We curse those EPAIPÊN...them and we anathematize [ἀναθεματί[ζομ]εν<sup>228</sup>] them. Althaia, Kore, \*OREOBAZAGRA Hekate Moon who devours its tail...ITHIBI...we anathematize [ἀναθεματίζομεν] them—body, spirit, soul, mind, thought, feeling, life, heart—with Hekatean words and Hebrew oaths...Earth Hekate...commanded by the holy names and oaths of the Hebrews—hair, head, brain, face, ears, eyebrows, nostrils...jaws, teeth...so that their soul may sigh, their health may..., their blood (and) flesh may burn and (let) him/her sigh with what he/she suffers...<sup>229</sup>

(Side B) I invoke...also Moon, the triple-named, who (circulates?) in the middle of the night whenever the...walk about, who courses the heavens with a strong hand, the visible one with the dark-blue mantle...on land and sea, Einodia (?)..., we anathematize (?) them<sup>230</sup>...and enrol [[κατα]γρά[φ]ομεν] them for punishments, pain and retribution...the body. Anathema.<sup>231</sup>

In this binding curse, the victim is registered, “enrolled”—transferred—to the authority of Hecate (as denoted by καταγράφω<sup>232</sup>) to suffer “hellish” physical punishment. As

Versnel notes:

It expresses the wish that the cursed person will moan and that his blood and flesh will burn. Finally, it directs the curse to “punishment and retaliation and revenge”...several elements betray a Jewish influence and I think that in the quoted passages the punishments of hell are intended, just as the term κολάσεις by itself also meant “hell”.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> For occurrences of ἀνάθημα, cf. *DT* 41: A5-6, 8-9; B17. For a discussion of the function of ἀνάθεμα in Paul’s letters, cf. part 3.4.2.3.

<sup>229</sup> Wunsch, *Antike*, 4-7.

<sup>230</sup> Gager (*Curse*, 184) suggests “we anathematise” in lieu of the Greek text ενωνπα[ρατίτ]ομεν τούτο[υς].

<sup>231</sup> Gager, *Curse Tablets*, 183-184. Cf. *DT* 41:A, B.

<sup>232</sup> Ἀνάθημα may also carry the connotation of dedicating to a deity for destruction: “the following meanings have evolved: the consecrated gift, the offering (set up in the temple of the deity); what is handed over (to the wrath of the gods); what is dedicated (to destruction), and what has fallen under the power of a curse or ban” (H. Aust and D. Müller, “Curse, Insult, Fool”, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 1: A-F, C. Brown (ed.), [Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1975] 413-415 at 413). Cf. Part 3.4.2.3.

<sup>233</sup> Versnel, “Beyond”, 65.

These two binding curses, in which καταγράφω features, demonstrate the longevity of the vocabulary of cursing (there is a minimum of four hundred and fifty years between the composition of these two lead tablets). Tomlin offers a helpful explanation for the consistency of such language:

All language, in a sense, is formulaic. We use words and phrases we have heard others use; if we did not, we would not be understood. One man's idiom is another man's cliché. However, religion and law exaggerate this necessary conservatism of language, by using and repeating phrases which acquire sanctity by repetition and familiarity.<sup>234</sup>

### 2.2.2.3 Κατατίθημι, 'Ανατίθημι, 'Ανιερώνω, and Παρατίτομαι

Like παραδίδωμι and καταγράφω, κατατίθημι has a technical meaning in binding (curse) formulae which denotes a transfer to the authority of a (chthonic) deity. Whereas καταγράφω possesses a legal nuance, “*katatithenai* conveys the sense of consigning or handing over, often in business matters.”<sup>235</sup> Consider the following binding curse discovered in the Athenian Agora, and dated to the first century C. E. which concerns theft:

I make an exception for the writer and the destroyer, because he does this unwillingly, forced (into it) by the thieves.<sup>236</sup> I register [καταγράφω] and hand over [κατατίθεμε]<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> R. S. O. Tomlin, “The Curse Tablets” in B. Cunliffe (ed.), *The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath: Volume 2 The Finds from the Sacred Spring* (Oxford: Oxford University Committee for Archaeology 16, 1998), 59-277 at 63.

<sup>235</sup> Gager, *Curse*, 182 n. 3.

<sup>236</sup> Versnel (“Beyond”, 66), following Jordan, translates the initial sentence of this curse differently from Gager:

I make an exception for the one who is writing this *defixio* and thereby destroying the thieves, because he does not do this voluntarily but is forced by the thieves.” Whilst Versnel concedes that this text resembles a traditional binding curse text (he uses the term “*defixio*”), he erroneously argues that “It is as if the author contends that he does *not* belong in the collections of Wunsch and Audollent. But where does he belong? We will discover this forthwith with the help of a text that marks the transition between the traditional *defixio* and what we usually call prayer (Versnel, “Beyond”, 66).

*Contra*. Versnel, the author readily overcomes his reluctance to curse. It is possible that the author, mindful of the ferocity of his curse, is concerned of any repercussions for himself of unleashing the curse. Regardless, whilst Versnel makes some insightful distinctions in the categorisation of ancient binding and curse texts, his juxtaposition of “*defixio*” (for which he means curse)—private—and



to Pluto and to the Fates and to Persephone and to the Furies and to every harmful being; I hand (them) over [κατατίθεμε] to Hekate, eater of what has been demanded by the gods (?); I hand over [κατατίθεμε] to the goddesses and gods of the underworld, and to Hermes the helper; I transfer the thieves [κατατίθεμε] who stole from the little house in the quarter/street (?) Called Acheloou—(who stole) chain, three spreads (one woolen, white, new), gum arabic...tools, white piles of dirt, linseed oil, and three white (objects): mastic, pepper, and bitter almonds. I hand over [κατατίθεμε] those who know about the theft and deny it. I hand over [Κατατίθεμε] all of them who have received what is contained in this deposition. Lady Hekate of the heavens,<sup>238</sup> Hekate of the underworld, Hekate of the crossroads, Hekate of the triple-face, Hekate of the single-face, cut (out) the hearts of the thieves or the thief who took the items contained in this deposition. And let the earth not be walkable, the sea not sailable; let there be no enjoyment of life, no increase of children, but may utter destruction visit them or him. As inspector, you will wield upon them the bronze sickle, and you will cut them out (?). But I exempt the writer and the destroyer.<sup>239</sup>

The unnamed author of this binding curse seeks revenge upon those who have stolen various items of property; and not only them, but also those “who know about the theft and deny it.” It is into the hands of various chthonic deities that the author registers and hands over, or “deposits”,<sup>240</sup> the matter. In response, Hekate is to “cut (out) the hearts of the thieves or the thief”.

Ἀνατίθημι<sup>241</sup> functions in a similar manner to κατατίθημι; and more generally, in the context of binding (curses) these terms share the same meaning as other legal and technical terms such as παραδίδωμι and καταγράφω. In the text of the following lead tablet, discovered at Cnidus (Asia Minor) and dated to around the first century B.

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“prayer”—public—is unhelpful.

<sup>237</sup> Παραδίδωμι features elsewhere in conjunction with cognates of κατατίθημι: cf. *DTA* 100; *DT* 74-75.

<sup>238</sup> Cf. Elderkin (“Two”, 391) who renders these two sentences: “And receive, hear this message, Hecate. I inscribe [Καταγράφω] o mistress Hecate Urania”.

<sup>239</sup> Gager, *Curse*, 182-183. Cf. *SEG* 30:326; *SGD* 21. For further discussion, cf. Versnel, “Beyond”, 66.

<sup>240</sup> Versnel, “Beyond”, 66.

<sup>241</sup> The first-person singular compound term ἀνατίθημι appears as the verb of binding in a number of curse tablets from Cnidus, in Asia Minor (cf. *DT* 1-13). Cf. *DT* 4:A1, 7, B:7, 11; 10:3. The term is ἀνατίθημι appears as an interpolation in *DT* 12:B1; 13:1, and as a partial reconstruction in *DT* 7:A1. An interpolated variant of ἀνατίθημι ([Ἀνατίθη]τι) appears in *DT* 4:B1.

C. E.<sup>242</sup> the victim is handed over, or “dedicated”<sup>243</sup> (ἀνατίθημι) to the authority of Demeter and Kore:

I hand over [[᾽Ανα]τίθημι]<sup>244</sup> to Demeter and Kore the person who has accused me of preparing poisons/spells [φάρμακα] against my husband. Having been struck by a fever, let him go up to Demeter with all of his family, and confess (his guilt). And let him not find Demeter, Kore, or the gods with Demeter (to be) merciful. As for me, let it be permissible and acceptable for me to be under the same roof or involved with him in any way. And I hand over [ἀνατίθημι] also the person who has written (charges) against me or commanded others to do so. And let him not benefit from the mercy of Demeter, Kore, or the gods with Demeter, but instead suffer afflictions with all of his family.<sup>245</sup>

Punishment is sought for suggesting that the author of this binding curse has acted malevolently towards her husband. “Fever” is to coerce a resolution to the complainant’s situation with the guilty party “confessing” to the gods for this false accusation. A second person is also indicted. Whilst no corporate act is required of this second individual, the same punishment as before is similarly restated, this time extended to his family as well.

᾽Ανιερῶ<sup>246</sup> functions similarly to ἀνατίθημι (and παραδίδωμι, καταγράφω, and κατατίθημι). All of these verbs “seek to define a relationship between the victim and a divinity: one “dedicates” [ἀνατίθημι and ἀνιερῶ] a man to a particular superhuman being and “registers” [καταγράφω] him in the god’s world.”<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Gager, *Curse*, 188.

<sup>243</sup> Graf, *Magic*, 125.

<sup>244</sup> The reconstruction here is persuasive, as the phrase ᾽Ανατίθημι Δάματρι καὶ Κόραι features on the reverse side (B) of this tablet at line 11 (i.e., DT 4:1-14 at 11). Furthermore, the individual term ἀνατίθημι appears in DT 4:7.

<sup>245</sup> DT 4:1-10 (as translated by Gager, *Curse*, 190).

<sup>246</sup> Cf. DT 2.

<sup>247</sup> Graf, *Magic*, 126.



The following binding curse, discovered at the temple of Demeter and Kore on Akrocorinth “in a fill of the late second to early third century after Christ”,<sup>248</sup> is one of “fourteen lead curse tablets [discovered] by means of which a number of individuals were consigned to the underworld gods for punishment.”<sup>249</sup> A woman—Karpile Babbia—is cursed:<sup>250</sup>

I consign [παράθιτομα[ι]<sup>251</sup>] and entrust [καταθί[το]μα[ι]] Karpile Babbia, the weaver of garlands, to the Fates who exact justice, so that they may expose her acts of insolence, and to Hermes of the Underworld, to Earth, to the children of Earth, so that they may overcome and completely destroy [διεργάσωνται] her [?] and her heart and her mind and the wits of Karpile Babbia, the weaver of garlands. I adjure [ὀρκίζω] you and I implore you and I beg of you, Hermes of the Underworld, [to grant] heavy curses [Ἀνάγκης].<sup>252</sup>

Once in their authority, the Fates, and Hermes, are to “overcome and completely destroy her”. Hermes is adjured to grant “heavy curses.”

#### 2.2.2.4 *Dono, Mando, and Trado*

One hundred and thirty curse tablets, dating from the second to fourth centuries C. E. were discovered at the Temple to Sulis Minerva in Bath, England.<sup>253</sup> Instead of the verb *defigere*,<sup>254</sup> which does not appear in the *Tabellae Sulis* (hereafter *Tab. Sulis*), *donatio*

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<sup>248</sup> Details from a personal correspondence between L. J. Brennehan and R. S. Stroud. Similarly, the Greek text is also contained in this form.

<sup>249</sup> R. S. Stroud, “Curses from Corinth”, *American Journal of Archaeology*, 77 (1973), 228 at 228.

<sup>250</sup> Fourteen tablets which target women were discovered (Gager, “Curse”, 37 n. 92).

<sup>251</sup> Cf. Jordan, “New”, no. 31 (παρκαττίθεμαι); no. 53 (παρκαττίθεμαι); no. 63 (παρκαττίθεται).

<sup>252</sup> N. Bookidis & R. S. Stroud, *Demeter and Persephone in Ancient Corinth* (Princeton, New Jersey: American School Of Classical Studies At Athens, 1987), 30. Cf. SGD 55.

<sup>253</sup> J. N. Adams, “British Latin: The Text, Interpretation and Language of the Bath Curse Tablets”, *Britannia* 23 (1992), 1-26 at 1.

<sup>254</sup> Cf. *configere* (*Tab. Sulis* 97:5 [inv. no. 669]). Tomlin (“Curse”, 59-277 at 59) notes that *defigere* is found in three British curse tablets (R. G. Collingwood and R. P. Wright [eds], *Roman Inscriptions of Britain: Inscriptions on Stone* 1 [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965], 6, 7, 221 [hereafter



(the most common verb),<sup>255</sup> *devoveo*,<sup>256</sup> and *ex(s)ecratio*<sup>257</sup> feature as part of the verbal formulae.<sup>258</sup> Like many Greek curse tablets,<sup>259</sup> these curse texts concern theft.<sup>260</sup> Unsurprisingly, a legal nuance peppers a significant proportion of the *Tabellae Sulis*.<sup>261</sup> As Tomlin notes:

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*RIB*)). The *Tab. Sulis* are curse tablets and not binding spells or binding curses. Tomlin ("Curse", 59-277 at 62) notes more generally that the curse tablets are "not magical spells." However, later in Tomlin's work the following statements appear: "Folklore and magic are full of tests for suspected thieves...The Bath lists can be seen as a magical identity parade" ("Curse", 59-277 at 95). Again, Tomlin ("Curse", 59-277 at 112 n. 2) cites a case of "sympathetic magic" in one of the curse tablets (*Tab. Sulis* 4 [inv. no. *RIB* 154]).

<sup>255</sup> Cf. *Tab. Sulis* 8:1 (inv. no. 473); 9:14 (inv. no. 612); 16:5 (inv. no. 523); 32:2 (inv. no. 616); 33:2 (inv. no. RBS 80 CS 3); 34:2 (inv. no. 621); 38:1 (inv. no. 687); 43:2 (inv. no. RBS 80 CS 3); 44:3 (inv. no. 615); 57:2 (inv. no. 419); 60:2 (inv. no. 600); 61:1 (inv. no. 664); 62:1 (inv. no. RBS 80 CS 3); 65:2 (inv. no. 671); 66:1 (inv. no. 614); 97:1 (inv. no. 669).

<sup>256</sup> Cf. *Tab. Sulis* 10:5 (inv. no. 638)

<sup>257</sup> E.g. "I curse [*execro*] (him) who has stolen, who has robbed Deomiorix from his house. Whoever (stole his) property, the god is to find him. Let him buy it back with (his) blood and his own life" (*Tabellae Sulis* 99:1 [inv. no. 667]).

<sup>258</sup> Cf. *devoveo* (*Tab. Sulis* 10:5 [inv. no. 638])

<sup>259</sup> Cf. *DT* 1-14.

<sup>260</sup> Cf. the following Jewish curse from the Cairo Genizah which adjures angels in order to curse an Ishmaelite thief:

(1) In the name of Shaddai who created the heaven (2) and the earth. I adjure you, (3) holy angels, that you should come (4) and help me, and support me, and fortify (5) me, and not hold me back from doing (6) an uprooting, a chasing away, a crushing (7) destroying, annihilating, of 'Alī son of Nūh, (8) who is of the Ishmaelite religion, (9) at this hour, him and all those who help (10) him...May he never (19) see love, but only great (20) hatred. May he be pushed away and expelled from this valley (21) where he is. May conflagration be made to burn (22) in his heart, when he sees this place where 'Alī (23) the Ishmaelite reside (*magic words*) (24) Amen, Amen, Nesah Selah, tomorrow, (25) fast. Amen...This writing is appointed (26) for 'Alī the Ishmaelite, so that he may be cursed (?) (27) and wander from one place to another, and that there should be (28) no standing to this 'Alī, and that he should have (29) no comfort in this dwelling which he has (30) taken (?), and the place which he has taken by robbery (31) until they go and fall to bed, in illness, all (32) the days of their lives, when he sits in the place which (33) he has robbed, with the 248 limbs (34) that are in the body of this 'Alī. In the name of (*magic words*). (37) You glorified (38) names (?), great and mightily, expel and banish (39) this evil 'Alī from my neighbourhood, so that he should not stay (40) there even one hour, but that he may fall ill with a serious illness, that he should not (41) eat or drink or sleep until he goes away (42) <<from this stable and throne>>. By the truth (43) of his (?) great name, move him away from my neighbourhood. (*magic characters*). (45) Amen, Amen, (46) Selah (Naveh and S. Shaked, *Magic*, 165-166).

<sup>261</sup> Tomlin convincingly demonstrates the "legal flavour" of these curse tablets by listing thirty-one Latin phrases drawn from legal parlance that appear in the *Tab. Sulis* (Tomlin, "Curse", 59-277 at 71).



The misdemeanour was usually a petty theft for which the deity was petitioned to extract a disproportionately heavy penalty – disproportionate at least to modern eyes! The set formulas used are reminiscent of legal jargon and imply that standard texts were copied to make sure that the curse was ‘fixed’ precisely and did not backfire on the petitioner.<sup>262</sup>

Not only are the *Tabellae Sulis* “prayers of a kind...but they are also legal documents, again of a kind in their concern for justice, the punishment of thieves, the recovery of stolen property.”<sup>263</sup> Tomlin interprets the frequency of crime and punishment in the British curse tablets as a symptom, not only of a poor ancient judicial system but of an “under-policed world”.<sup>264</sup> It is in this context that the language of the *Tabellae Sulis* is readily explicable; legal language is employed because the petition takes place within the context of crime and punishment: justice is sought.

The tablets evidence several mechanisms for dealing with theft. In response to theft, a conditional,<sup>265</sup> or unconditional,<sup>266</sup> curse could be uttered. In many of the curses, physical pain is visited upon the thief by Sulis Minerva to extract the return of the stolen goods.<sup>267</sup> Thus, the goddess inflicts a curse<sup>268</sup> in the form of death,<sup>269</sup> or weakened

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<sup>262</sup> Tomlin, “Curse”, 59-277 at 361. The idea of standard texts, or recipe books, that could be copied is unsurprising given the formulaic understanding of magic.

<sup>263</sup> Tomlin, “Curse”, 59-277 at 63.

<sup>264</sup> Tomlin, “Curse”, 59-277 at 70.

<sup>265</sup> Cf. *Tab. Sulis* 10:5 (inv. no. 638); 32:7, 14 (inv. no. 616); 45:6 (inv. no. 691); 64:6 (inv. no. 417).

<sup>266</sup> Cf. *Tab. Sulis* 4 (*RIB* 154); 10 (inv. no. 477): “Docimedis has lost two gloves. (He asks) that (the person) who has stolen them should lose his minds [*sic*] and his eyes in the temple where (she) appoints.”

<sup>267</sup> The god Mars is addressed in *Tab. Sulis* 33:1 (inv. no. RBS 80 CS 3), the temple of Mars in *Tab. Sulis* 97 (inv. no. 669), and Mercury is mentioned in *Tab. Sulis* 53 (inv. no. 601).

<sup>268</sup> Some curses are opaque. For example, *Tab. Sulis* 4:2 (inv. no. *RIB* 154) curses with the words “become as liquid as water”. Cf. Adams, “British”, 1-26 at 17 for further discussion.

<sup>269</sup> *Tab. Sulis* 10:11 (inv. no. 638); *Tab. Sulis* 31:4 (inv. no. 677); 39:2 (inv. no. 676); 99:6 (inv. no. 667); 103 (inv. no. 668).

life,<sup>270</sup> sleep deprivation,<sup>271</sup> loss of health,<sup>272</sup> childlessness,<sup>273</sup> loss of limbs,<sup>274</sup> inability to sit, lie, or walk,<sup>275</sup> cursed blood,<sup>276</sup> rotting of the intestine,<sup>277</sup> blindness,<sup>278</sup> loss of mind,<sup>279</sup> and prevention of eating and defecating.<sup>280</sup>

Commonly, the stolen item is handed over, or given (*dono*), to the goddess.<sup>281</sup> For example:

Solinus to the goddess Sulis Minerva. I give [dono] to your divinity (and) majesty (my) bathing tunic and cloak. Do not allow sleep or health to him who has done me wrong, whether man or woman, whether slave or free, unless he reveals himself and brings those goods to your temple...his children or his...and (?) who...to him also...sleep or [health]...cloak and the rest, unless they bring those things to your temple.<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> *Tab. Sulis* 37:1-2 (inv. no. 594)

<sup>271</sup> *Tab. Sulis* 10:12-13 (inv. no. 638); 32:4 (inv. no. 616); 35:6 (inv. no. 655); 54:8 (inv. no. 20,004); 100:7 (inv. no. *RIB* 2349).

<sup>272</sup> *Tab. Sulis* 32:5 (inv. no. 616); 45:7 (inv. no. 691); 52:2-3 (inv. no. 689); 54:8 (inv. no. 20,004); 64:1 (inv. no. 417).

<sup>273</sup> *Tab. Sulis* 10:14-15 (inv. no. 638).

<sup>274</sup> *Tab. Sulis* 97:4 (inv. no. 669).

<sup>275</sup> *Tab. Sulis* 54:6-7 (inv. no. 20,004).

<sup>276</sup> *Tab. Sulis* 97:4 (inv. no. 669). Other mentions of blood occur in the following places: *Tab. Sulis* 6:7 (inv. no. 673); 38:4-5 (inv. no. 687); 41:2 (inv. no. 598); 44:5-6 (inv. no. 615); 47:4 (inv. no. 684); 65:11 (inv. no. 671); 66:11 (inv. no. 614); 94:8 (inv. no. 618); 97:4 (inv. no. 669); 98:8-9 (inv. no. 622); 99:5 (inv. no. 667).

<sup>277</sup> *Tab. Sulis* 97:6 (inv. no. 669).

<sup>278</sup> *Tab. Sulis* 5:6-7 (inv. no. 477); 45:6-7 (inv. no. 691); 97:4 (inv. no. 669).

<sup>279</sup> *Tab. Sulis* 5:5 (inv. no. 477).

<sup>280</sup> *Tab. Sulis* 41:5-6 (inv. no. 598).

<sup>281</sup> Cf. *Tab. Sulis* 8:1 (inv. no. 473); 32:2 (inv. no. 616); 34:2 (inv. no. 621); 38:1 (inv. no. 687); 43:2 (inv. no. *RBS* 80 CS 3); 60:2 (inv. no. 600); 62:1 (inv. no. *RBS* 80 CS 3); 65:2 (inv. no. 671); 66:1 (inv. no. 614).

<sup>282</sup> *Tab. Sulis* 32 (inv. no. 616).



Like the function of παραδίδωμι, καταγράφω, κατατίθημι, ἀνατίθημι, ἀνιερόω, and παραθίτομαι in the context of ancient cursing,<sup>283</sup> the matter is placed into the authority of the goddess. Thus, in binding formulae, the binding matter was committed to the authority of a god(dess) for enacting. In the above non-binding context, it is the stolen goods (“tunic and cloak”) that are committed to the authority (or temporary ownership in this context) of the goddess; she is then charged with its recovery.<sup>284</sup> In addition to property, people are also given (*dono*) to the goddess,<sup>285</sup> or to the goddess’s temple.<sup>286</sup> For example:

To Minerva the goddess Sulis I have given [dono] the thief who has stolen my hooded cloak, whether slave or free, whether man or woman. He is not to buy back this gift unless with his own blood.<sup>287</sup>

In this curse, the thief is given to the authority of the Sulis Minerva for punishment: “he can only redeem himself from this ‘transfer’ (*donum*) with his blood.”<sup>288</sup> Like the function of the Latin verb *dono* in curse tablets, other terms similarly function in the context of ancient cursing. For example, in the following curse dated to the first century

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<sup>283</sup> Commenting upon the “formulaic” language of the *Tab. Sulis*, Tomlin (“Curse”, 59-277 at 63) argues that:

the occurrence of the same or similar phrases in different tablets shews that they draw upon a common stock of language. This stock, ultimately, was wide, since the same ‘formulas’ can be found in other British curse tablets, and even sometimes in non-British curse tablets. On occasions [*sic*] they can be paralleled in Roman literature and law...it might be said, the Bath tablets draw upon language and ideas current for hundreds of mile and hundreds of years.

<sup>284</sup> Cf. Gager, *Curse*, 175.

<sup>285</sup> *Tab. Sulis* 65:2 (inv. no. 671). Cf. *Tab. Sulis* 42:2 (inv. no. 399); *Tab. Sulis* 57:2 (inv. no. 419); *Tab. Sulis* 61:1 (inv. no. 664).

<sup>286</sup> *Tab. Sulis* 44:3 (inv. no. 615).

<sup>287</sup> *Tab. Sulis* 65 (inv. no. 671).

<sup>288</sup> Versnel, “Beyond”, 87. In relation to *Tab. Sulis* 94 (inv. no. 618): “Whosoever committed perjury will give satisfaction [or will atone] to the Dea Sulis for it with his blood”, Versnel (“Beyond”, 85) argues that “*sanguine suo satisfacere* can mean nothing else here except “atone *with* his own blood” (therefore with illness, in particular with fever, and perhaps even death).”



B. C. E., Plotius is handed over (from *trado*),<sup>289</sup> and consigned (from *mando*),<sup>290</sup> to Proserpina Salvia as every part of his body is targeted:<sup>291</sup>

Good and beautiful Proserpina or Salvia, if you prefer that I call you so, wife of Pluto, snatch away the health, the body, the complexion, the strength, and the faculties of Plotius. Hand him over [*trado*] to Pluto, your husband. May he not be able to escape this (curse) by his wits. Hand him over [*trado*<sup>292</sup>] to fevers—quartan, tertian and daily—so that they wrestle and struggle with him. Let them overcome him to the point where they snatch away his soul. Thus I give over [*trad[o]*] to you this victim, O Proserpina or Acherusia if you prefer that I call you so. Summon for me the triple-headed hound to snatch away the heart of Plotius. Promise that you will give him three victims (gifts)—dates, figs, and a black pig—if he completes this before the month of March. These I will offer you, Proserpina Salvia, when you complete this in an orderly fashion. I give over [*dono*] to you the head of Plotius, the slave/son of Avonia.

Proserpina Salvia, I give over [*dono*] to you the head of Plotius.

Proserpina Salvia, I give over [*dono*] to you the forehead of Plotius.

Proserpina Salvia, I give over [*dono*] to you the eyebrows of Plotius.

Proserpina Salvia, I give over [*dono*] to you the eyelids of Plotius.

Proserpina Salvia, I give over [*dono*] to you the pupils of Plotius.

Proserpina Salvia, I give over [*dono*] to you the nostrils, lips, ears, nose, tongue, and teeth of Plotius, so that he may not be able to say what is causing him pain; the neck, shoulders, arms, and fingers, so that he may not be able to aid himself in any way; his breast, liver, heart, and lungs, so that he may not be able to discover the source of his pain; his intestines, stomach, navel, and sides, so that he may not be able to sleep; his shoulder blades, so that he may not be able to sleep soundly; his “sacred organ” so that he may not be able to urinate; his rump, anus, thighs, knees, shanks, shins, feet, ankles, heels, toes, and toenails, so that he may not be able to stand by his own strength. No matter what he may have written, great or small, just as he has written a proper spell and commissioned it (against me), so I hand over [*trado*] and consign [*mando*] Plotius to you, so that you may take care of him by the month of February. Let him perish miserably. Let him leave life miserably. Let him be destroyed miserably. Take care of him so that he may not see another month.<sup>293</sup>

In this part (2.2), we have considered the phenomenon of curse tablets and binding spells. Initially, we were concerned with the definitional confusion that was evident in scholarly discourse within this field (cf. part 2.2.1). As such, we established our own working definitions to aid us in our examination of this phenomenon (in part 2.2.1.1).

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<sup>289</sup> Cf. *DT* 248:A14. Cf. “I call on you, demon, who lie here [in a grave, from which the text comes]: I deliver [*trado*] these horses to you so that you hold them back and that they get tangled up [in their harness] and are unable to move” (Graf, *Magic*, 155 [*DT* 233]).

<sup>290</sup> Cf. *DT* 195:7; 137:1-2; 297:4.

<sup>291</sup> Consider also, *commendo* (to commit): *DT* 190:1, 5; 139:12-14; 228:A2, B2; 266:1; 268:10; 295:8; 297:9; *dedico* (to dedicate): *DT* 199:11-12; *demando* (to entrust or commit): *DT* 268:2; 286:B2; 290:B1; 291:A6; 292:B2; 293:A7, B2-3; 294:8; 300:B1, 5.

<sup>292</sup> *Trado* is fully reconstructed (E. H. Warmington [ed. and trans.], *Remains of Old Latin*, vol. 4 [Loeb Classical Library; London: William Heinemann, 1959], 280-285).



On this foundation, we explored in more detail the technical and legal terminology of Greek cursing and binding spells: παραδίδωμι (in part 2.2.2.1); καταγράφω (in part 2.2.2.2); κατατίθημι, ἀνατίθημι, ἀνιερόω, and παραθίτομαι (in part 2.2.2.3); and in the Latin *Tab. Sulis*: *dono*, *mando* and *trado* (in part 2.2.2.4). This study demonstrated a common *conception* of cursing across a wide geographical area, which endured for many centuries. Terms like παραδίδωμι were shown to *function* in a similar manner to a broad range of terminology. Thus, the scope of our material for consideration in part three has been enlarged beyond that which merely contains instances of παραδίδωμι.

## 2.3 Cursing in the Dead Sea Scrolls

References to cursing in the *Dead Sea Scrolls* feature in interpretations of 1 Corinthians 5:5.<sup>294</sup> Crucially, the Dead Sea Scrolls provide us with an insight into the ways in which Biblical literature (and accounts of ancient cursing<sup>295</sup>) was interpreted within a strand of ancient Judaism.<sup>296</sup> Our study of cursing in the *Dead Sea Scrolls* is specific to

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<sup>293</sup> Gager, *Curse*, 241. Cf. *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 10:8249 (hereafter, *CIL*).

<sup>294</sup> For example, Yarbrow Collins ("Function", 251-263 at 256-257). Cf. "Analogous to 1 Corinthians 5: A Congregational cursing of other (evil) people by the congregational leaders (here, Levites) and the congregation itself (confirming the curse by their 'Amen, Amen')" (M. E. Boring, K. Berger, and C. Colpe [eds], *Hellenistic Commentary to the New Testament* [Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1995], 397).

<sup>295</sup> For a discussion of cursing in Tanakh, cf. part 2.1.

<sup>296</sup> Despite the differences between the *Dead Sea Scrolls* and the Paul's letters, both corpora are written within the context of ancient Judaism; the *Dead Sea Scrolls* are broadly contemporaneous with Paul's letters; and both writings concern a specific communal context (in the *Dead Sea Scrolls*, the Qumran community features; in the case of 1 Corinthians, the church community in Corinth features). Cf. T. H. Lim, "Studying the Qumran Scrolls and Paul in their Historical Context" in J. R. Davila (ed.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls as Background to Postbiblical Judaism and Early Christianity: Papers from an International Conference at St. Andrews in 2001* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 135-156. For a more extensive consideration, see T. H. Lim, *Holy Scripture in the Qumran Commentaries and Pauline Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997). More generally, consider E. P. Sanders, "The Dead Sea Sect and Other Jews: Commonalities, Overlaps and Differences" in T. H. Lim, L. W. Hurtado, A. G. Auld, and A. Jack (eds),

our later exegesis of 1 Corinthians 5 (in part three). As such, we will focus upon examples of communal and liturgical cursing.

### 2.3.1 Communal and Liturgical Cursing

In the Community Rule (1QS), cursing features within the context of an annual covenant renewal ceremony.<sup>297</sup> This liturgical text adapted from Numbers 6:24-26 and Deuteronomy 29:17-20 to the particularity of the Qumran community<sup>298</sup> is recited by “the priests and the levites”,<sup>299</sup> with the familiar biblical antiphon from the community: “Amen, Amen”.<sup>300</sup> The priests are to recite God’s “mighty works...[and] all his merciful favours towards Israel”,<sup>301</sup> whilst the Levites declare the “iniquities of the children of Israel”.<sup>302</sup> Those entering the covenant respond to the priests and Levites by confessing: “We have acted sinfully, we have [trans]gressed, we have [si]nned, we have committed evil, we and our [fa]thers before us, inasmuch as we walk [...] truth and just[...] his judgment upon us and upon o[ur] fathers”.<sup>303</sup>

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*The Dead Sea Scrolls in their Historical Context* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 7-43.

<sup>297</sup> 1QS 1:16, 20.

<sup>298</sup> Nitzan (B. Nitzan, “Blessings And Curses”, in L. H. Schiffman and J. C. VanderKam [eds], *Encyclopedia Of The Dead Sea Scrolls*, vol. 1 (A-M) [Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000], 95-100 at 95) notes that “[t]heir stylistic forms and usage follow those of the biblical blessings and curses. However, they are used in the life of the Qumran community on a limited number of occasions and adapted in terms of content and liturgical form to express sectarian dualistic ideas.” For further discussion, see Nitzan, “Blessings”, 95-96.

<sup>299</sup> 1QS 1:18-19. All quotations are taken from F. G. Martínez and E. J. C. Tigchelaar (trans. and eds), *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (2 vols; Leiden, Boston, and Köln: E. J. Brill, 1998).

<sup>300</sup> 1QS 1:20.

<sup>301</sup> 1QS 1:21-22.

<sup>302</sup> 1QS 1:22-23.

<sup>303</sup> 1QS 1:24-26.



Following the pronouncement of a blessing,<sup>304</sup> the Levites “curse all the men of the lot of Belial”, to which the refrain follows: “Amen, Amen”:<sup>305</sup>

They shall begin to speak and shall say: <<Accursed [אָרֹר] are you for all your wicked, blameworthy deeds. May God hand you over to terror by the hand of all those carrying out acts of vengeance. May he bring upon you destruction without mercy, according to the darkness of your deeds, and sentenced to the gloom of everlasting fire. May God not be merciful when you entreat him. May he not forgive by purifying your iniquities. May he lift the countenance of his anger to avenge himself on you, and may there be no peace for you by the mouth of those who intercede>>.<sup>306</sup>

In this liturgical text, “Belial and his minions (both demonic and human) are ritually damned.”<sup>307</sup> The agent of this curse, God, is to deliver the victims to “terror by the hand of all those carrying out acts of vengeance”,<sup>308</sup> to “destruction”, and to the “gloom of everlasting fire.” Mercy and forgiveness are to be withheld. The text continues with a curse spoken by the Priests and Levites against those who enter into the covenant

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<sup>304</sup> 1QS 2:1-4.

<sup>305</sup> 1QS 2:10.

<sup>306</sup> 1QS 2: 5-9//4Q256:3-4//4Q257:1:2//5Q11:1-6.

<sup>307</sup> P. S. Alexander, “Magic and Magical Texts” in L. H. Schiffman and J. C. VanderKam, *Encyclopedia Of The Dead Sea Scrolls*, vol. 1 (A-M), (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), 502-504 at 502. Compare the fragmentary curse text 5Q14, in which Belial and his followers are cursed:

and over [...] [...] may your [e]yes fall out from you [...] [...] may your [...] fall with every fol[ly...] [...] may they destroy you from among all the ... [...] [...] may he have little and not enough, for [...].

<sup>308</sup> Whilst Belial and his followers are frequently accursed within the *Dead Sea Scrolls*, Belial and his lot are also God’s tool:

These escaped at the time of the first visitation while the renegades were delivered up to the sword. Thus will be the judgment of all those entering his covenant but who do not remain steadfast in them; they shall be visited for destruction at the hand of Belial (CD 7:21-8:1-2).

Cf. 4Q256:1 in which Belial can acts as Yahweh’s agent of testing. Steudel (A. Steudel, “God and Belial” in L. H. Schiffman, E. Tov, and J. C. VanderKam [eds], *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Fifty Years After Their Discovery: Proceedings of the Jerusalem Congress, July 20-25, 1997* [Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2000], 332-340 at 339) notes that “It is God who tests his people with the help of his instrument Belial.”

whilst revering idols.<sup>309</sup> The desire of this curse, modelled on Deuteronomy 29:18-20,<sup>310</sup> is to effect the obliteration his spirit (רוח) and exclusion:

his spirit [רוח] will be obliterated, the dry with the moist, without mercy. May God's anger and the wrath of his verdicts consume him for everlasting destruction. May stick fast to him all the curses of this covenant. May God separate him for evil, and may he be cut off from the midst of all the sons of light because of his straying from following God on account of his idols and obstacle of his iniquity. May he assign his lot with the cursed ones for ever>>.<sup>311</sup>

As with other curses in the *Dead Sea Scrolls*, God is the “source of their power”.<sup>312</sup> In its liturgical context, this form of cursing is reminiscent of an imprecation in which God is addressed through prayer to inflict suffering upon another. However, as Steudel notes, this curse also functions as a self-curse by which the community separate themselves from Belial and his cohorts:

The cursing of Belial and his lot on this occasion by the Levites and the acclamation “amen, amen” by the whole assembly functions simultaneously as a self-damnation and self-excommunication of those members who had fallen under the reign of Belial. The community keeps itself pure by such a ritual, prescribed to be held during all the years of Belial's dominion.<sup>313</sup>

In addition to 1QS, scholars locate the curse text 4Q280 within the context of the annual covenant renewal ceremony, albeit as a less developed precursor to 1QS.<sup>314</sup> This partly reconstructed curse focuses upon Melchiresha' (another name for Belial).<sup>315</sup> He is cursed in a similar manner to 1QS 2:5-9 with the addition that he is to be:

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<sup>309</sup> 1QS 2:11-18. As previously, ארור features.

<sup>310</sup> Nitzan, “Blessings”, 95-100 at 97.

<sup>311</sup> 1QS 2:14-17.

<sup>312</sup> Nitzan, “Blessings”, 95-100 at 95.

<sup>313</sup> Steudel, “God”, 332-340 at 335.

<sup>314</sup> Nitzan, “Blessings”, 95-100 at 97.

<sup>315</sup> Steudel, “God”, 332-340 at 332.



without a remnant; and be damned, without salvation. And accursed be those who act [...] and those who fulfil your plan in their hearts to plot against the covenant of God [...and against] [the word]s of those seeing [his] tru[th. And a]ll those who decline to enter [the covenant of God...].<sup>316</sup>

The Berakhot (4Q286-290), dated “paleographically between approximately 1 through 50 CE”,<sup>317</sup> is reminiscent of both of the texts we have considered: 1QS and 4Q280. This liturgical curse text damns Belial: “*the* metaphysical negative entity par excellence”,<sup>318</sup> and his followers “the sons of Beli[al]”.<sup>319</sup> The participants in this public curse, “the Community Council”,<sup>320</sup> seek the “annihilation” of Belial and his kind.<sup>321</sup> In 4Q266 11:11-14 cursing is linked with a liturgical act of expulsion:

You chose our father and gave their descendants your truthful regulations and your holy precepts, so that man could carry them out and live. And you established frontiers for us, and you curse those who cross them. And we are the ransom and the flock of your pasture. You curse those who cross them but us you have raised up. And the one who has been expelled will leave, and the man who eats from his riches, and the one who seeks his peace, {the one who has been expelled} and the one who is in agreement with him. And his sentence will be written down by the Inspector’s hand, as an engraving, and his judgment will be complete. And all [those who dwell in] the camps will assemble in the third month and will curse [רר] whoever tends to the right [or to the left of the] law.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> 4Q280:1-7. Cf. 1QM 13:4-5.

<sup>317</sup> B. Nitzén, “Berakhot”, in L. H. Schiffman and J. C. VanderKam, (eds), *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, vol. 1 (A-M), (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000) 93-94 at 93.

<sup>318</sup> Steudel, “God”, 334.

<sup>319</sup> 4Q286 7:2:6.

<sup>320</sup> 4Q286: 7:2:1.

<sup>321</sup> 4Q286: 7:2:6. Again, in the War Scroll (1QM 8:4-12), Belial and his followers are “cursed” and “damned”. Cf. 4Q275: this fragmentary text outlines a procedure for cursing an errant community member.

<sup>322</sup> 4Q266 11:11-18.

Outside of the communal liturgical context of cursing, the “curse of Aba[ddon]” is referred to in the context of exorcism.<sup>323</sup> In another exorcistic context, a spirit is adjured, as is common in Graeco-Roman formulae:

before [him...] and...[...] before him and ... [...] And I, O spirit, adjure [...] I enchant you, O spirit, [...] [o]n the earth, in clouds [...] [...] [...].<sup>324</sup> (4Q560:2:1-8).

In retrospect, cursing frequently features in a liturgical context within the Dead Sea Scrolls. Furthermore, the victim of the curse is invariably Belial and his minions, who, through divine agency, are damned. Whilst cursing in the Dead Sea Scrolls resonates strongly with Tanakh, it is reformed to serve the needs of the community in which cursing also features within the context of exclusion.

## 2.4 (Binding) Curses in the Greek Magical Papyri

The *PGM* is a recipe book,<sup>325</sup> which contains texts “from the second century B.C. to the fifth century A.D”.<sup>326</sup> However, even the formulae contained in the later dated texts were not first *conceived* at that time,<sup>327</sup> contrary to the misleading assertions of some exegetes whom we considered in part one.<sup>328</sup> For example, Morton Smith notes that

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<sup>323</sup> 11Q11:4:1-13.

<sup>324</sup> 4Q560:2:1-8. Cf. A. Lange, “The Essene Position on Magic and Divination” in M. Bernstein, F. G. Martínez, and J. Kampen (eds), *Legal Texts and Legal Issues: Proceedings of the Second Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies Cambridge 1995* (Leiden, New York, and Köln: E. J. Brill, 1997), 377-435.

<sup>325</sup> Cf. Betz: “The magical handbooks which make up most of the material represent collections and thus selections of those texts that were deemed by collectors to constitute an authoritative tradition” (H. D. Betz, “Magic and Mystery in the Greek Magical Papyri”, *Hellenismus und Urchristentum*, [Tübingen, J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1990], 217).

<sup>326</sup> *GMP*, xli.

<sup>327</sup> There is a general trend towards complexity in ancient formulae. For example, ancient binding formulae were initially simple (sometimes containing only the verb of binding); over the centuries they became progressively elaborate.

<sup>328</sup> As we noted in part 1.2.3.3, South (*Disciplinary*, 44-45) claims that the παραδίδωμι formulae in *PGM* (which we will consider) cited by Conzelmann and Yarbro Collins are “so far after Paul’s time as to make it highly conjectural that similar formulae using similar terminology could have



*The Prayer of Jacob* (PGM 22b:1-26) fits “first century Judaism, and...[has] no elements requiring a later date”.<sup>329</sup> Furthermore, even the later extant papyri resonate strongly with other traditions,<sup>330</sup> as will become clear through our study of formulae in which παραδίδωμι phraseology features. *PGM* contains a range of genres, as Betz notes: “we find citations of hymns, rituals, formulae from liturgies otherwise lost, and little bits of mythology called *historiolae*.” Furthermore, *PGM* is also culturally diverse:

Since the material comes from Greco-Roman Egypt, it reflects an amazingly broad religious and cultural pluralism. Not surprising is the strong influence of Egyptian religion throughout the Greek magical papyri, although here the texts nevertheless show a great variety. Expressed in Greek, Demotic, or Coptic, some texts represent simply Egyptian religion. In others, the Egyptian element has been transformed by Hellenistic religious concepts. Most of the texts are mixtures of several religions—Egyptian, Greek, Jewish, to name the most important.<sup>331</sup>

In the following binding formula which resonates with Jewish tradition and a wider use

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had any influence on his [Paul’s] thought.”

This conclusion demonstrates a failure to recognise that *PGM* contains ancient formulae, as is demonstrated by our consideration of curse tablets and binding spells (in part 2.2). Beyond a similarity in formulae, *DT* 188 is reproduced in *PGM* 57:1-37.

<sup>329</sup> M. Smith, “The Jewish Elements in the Magical Papyri”, K. H. Richards (ed.), *Society of Biblical Literature 1986 Seminar Papers* 25 [Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press], 455-462 at 462.

<sup>330</sup> Cf. Betz (*GMP*, xlv) who maintains that literary criticism could be employed to recover the older material contained in *PGM* which is “now embedded in a secondary context”.

<sup>331</sup> *GMP*, xlv. Sections of *PGM* contain a number of resonances with Jewish tradition. For example, in the *Prayer of Jacob* the “Father of the patriarchs” is invoked:

Prayer of Jacob: O Father of the patriarchs, Father of the All, [Father] of the [cosmic] powers, [Creator of all]..., Creator of angels and archangels, the Creator of the [saving] names. I summon you, Father of all powers, Father of the entire [cosmos] and of all / creation inhabited and uninhabited, to whom the [cherubim] are subjected, [who] favored Abraam by [giving the] kingdom [to him]...: hear me, O God of the powers, O [God] of angels [and] archangels...he who sits upon [holy] Mount Sinai...I call upon you who give power [over] the Abyss [to those] above, to those below, and to those under the earth hear the one who has [this] prayer, O Lord God of the Hebrews, EPAGAËL ALAMN, of who is [the] eternal power, ELŌËL SOUËL. Maintain the one who possesses this prayer, who is from the stock of Israel and from those / who have been favored by you, O god of gods, you who have the secret name, SABAŌTH...I...CH, O god of gods, amen, amen (*GMP* 22b:1-26).

*PGM* resonates with Jewish tradition beyond the *Prayer of Jacob*. For example, the benediction “Hallelujah! Amen” might indicate that it is YHWH who is “the One who, / in the beginning, made the heaven and earth all that is therein” (*GMP* 7:270-272). See also *PGM* 4:1220-1264; 5:96-172. Jordan



of binding formulae in the ancient world, an “unclean daimon” is expelled:

Excellent rite for driving out daimons: Formula to be spoken over his head: Place olive branches before him, / and stand behind him and say: “Hail, God of Abraham; hail, God of Isaac; hail, God of Jacob; Jesus Chrestos,<sup>332</sup> the Holy Spirit, the Son of the Father, who is above the Seven, / who is within the Seven. Bring Iao Sabaoth; may your power issue forth from him, NN, until you drive away this unclean daimon Satan, who is in him. I conjure [ἐξορκίζω] you, daimon, / whoever you are, by this god, SABARBARBATHIŌTH SABARBARBATHIOUTH SABARBARBATHIŌNĒTH SABARBARBAPHAI. Come out, daimon, whoever you are, and stay away from him, NN, / now, now; immediately, immediately. Come out, daimon, since I bind [δεσμεύω] you with unbreakable adamantine fetters, and I deliver you [παραδίδωμι σε] into the black chaos of perdition.<sup>333</sup>

This “excellent”<sup>334</sup> Greek and Coptic exorcistic spell,<sup>335</sup> which features Yahweh, continues with instructions for creating a phylactery, in order to protect the exorcised individual from being newly assaulted.<sup>336</sup> The use of παραδίδωμι features in the context of a general benevolent binding formula.<sup>337</sup> It is envisioned that the daimon, identified earlier as, or with Satan,<sup>338</sup> will first be bound (δεσμεύω) and then committed (παραδίδωμι) to the daimonic realm or “black chaos of perdition”.<sup>339</sup> Παραδίδωμι adds the conclusive element to the binding spell—banishment. In

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(“Agora”, 241) notes that “Iao Sabaoth” is Yahweh (*PGM* 4:1227-1264).

<sup>332</sup> Betz (*GMP*, 62 n. 168) argues that “Chrēstos, [should be interpreted as] ‘excellent one,’ rather than *Christos*, ‘anointed one’.” Cf. *GMP* 4:3020: “I conjure [ὀρκίζω] you by the god of the Hebrews, / Jesus”; “I conjure [ἐξορκίζω] you in the Hebrew tongue” (*GMP* 3:120). The desire to bring daimons under the control of the adjurer is illustrated well by *PGM* 5:160-172.

<sup>333</sup> *GMP* 4:1227-1249 (emphasis added).

<sup>334</sup> *GMP* 4:1227.

<sup>335</sup> From “Hail, God” to “Satan, who is in him” is in a mixture of Coptic and Greek.

<sup>336</sup> *GMP* 4:1250-1264.

<sup>337</sup> Not all curses in *PGM* feature binding language. For example, the words of attraction in *PGM* 4:2441-2495 can be supplemented to cause “illness” or destruction: “*For causing illness*: Use these spells, adding, “Make her, NN, whom NN bore, ill.” *And for destroying*: Say, “Draw out her breath, Mistress, from the nostrils of her, NN” (*GMP* 4:2496-2499).

<sup>338</sup> *GMP* 4:1239.

<sup>339</sup> *GMP* 4:1249. Cf. Mark 3:20-30 which also concerns exorcism. Jesus states that the strong man must first be bound (δέω). For loosing (λύω) in *PGM*, see 7:455-458: “For Selene, when she goes through the underworld, breaks [λύω] whatever [spell] she find. But when this [rite] has been performed, [the spell] remains [unbroken] so long as you say over [the formula] daily at this spot [where the plate is deposited].”



contrast to this exorcistic formula, the following spell, in which παραδίδωμι features, is directed at bringing physical harm to a thief (his eye is to swell up) in order to disclose his identity:

With / the hammer strike the [eye] while saying the formula: “I conjure [ἐξορκίζω] you by the holy names; hand over the thief [παράδοξ τὸν κλέπτην] who made off with it ...Hand over the thief [παράδοξ τὸν κλέπτην] who stole it. As long as I strike the eye with this hammer, let the eye of the thief be struck, and let it swell up until it / betrays him. While saying these things, strike with the hammer.”<sup>340</sup>

This spell “represents the earliest evidence for a type of thief-detection spell (*Diebeszauber*)”, which was common across the ancient world: “from Egypt to Byzantium, to Italy and then to a large part of western Europe even as far as distant Iceland”.<sup>341</sup> Unlike *PGM* 5:70-95, in this instance the ones adjured are to deliver the thief to the victim by causing his eye to swell; thus, making him conspicuous. The *LMP* contains other formulae concerning theft:

Another way: “In order to catch a thief I summon you, Hermes, immortal god, who cut a furrow down Olympos / and a holy barge, light-bearer Iao, the great immortal, shuddersome indeed to behold and shuddersome to hear. Hand over [παράδοξ] the thief whom I seek...Master IAO, light-bearer, / hand over [παράδοξ] the thief whom I see.”<sup>342</sup>

In this instance, Hermes is called upon to deliver the thief to the author of this formula: “may you bring back to me what is lost and point out the thief today.”<sup>343</sup> In the previous thief detection spell, the sympathetic use of a hammer was employed. Here an elaborate recipe for bread and cheese features. The food is to be eaten by the alleged

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<sup>340</sup> *GMP* 5:75-94 (emphasis added). A similar formula, dating from the third to early fourth century C. E., is contained in *Suppl. Mag* 2:86:8 (p. 180): παράδοξ τὸν κλέπ[την].

<sup>341</sup> *Suppl. Mag.* 2:86 (p. 182).

<sup>342</sup> *GMP* 5:172-212.

<sup>343</sup> *GMP* 5:186.

thieves: “If one of them does not swallow what was given to him, he is the thief.”<sup>344</sup>

Elsewhere, παραδίδωμι appears within the context of another binding spell which seeks to gain control over a victim in order to prevent him from carrying out a task (the details are to be supplied by the person appropriating the formula). The victim is “handed over” (παραδίδωμι)—transferred to the authority of a νεκυδαίμων, for it is he—the νεκυδαίμων—who ensures the operation of this binding spell:

“Let so-and-so’s thoughts be bound so that he may not do NN thing.” ...“I bind NN with regard to NN [thing]. Let him not speak, not be contrary, not oppose; let him not be able to look me in the face nor speak against me; let him be subjected / to me, so long as this ring is buried. I bind his mind and his brains, his desire, his actions, so that he may be slow [in his dealings] with all men.” / And if it be a woman: “In order that she, NN, may not marry him, NN” (add the usual)...“Spirit of the dead [νεκυδαίμων<sup>345</sup>], who[ever] / you are, I give over NN to you [παραδίδωμί σοι τὸν δεῖνα<sup>346</sup>], so that he may not do NN thing.”<sup>347</sup>

Παραδίδωμι features similarly in *PGM* 7:448-450, which contains a general binding formula that not only “works even on chariots”,<sup>348</sup> but also “causes enmity / and sickness, cuts down, destroy, and overturns, for [whatever] you wish”.<sup>349</sup> The formula is to be “[e]ngraved” on “lead”, which as we have noted<sup>350</sup> was common in the

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<sup>344</sup> *GMP* 5:211-212. Cf. the function of water in Numbers 5:24 (which we considered in part 2.1.3).

<sup>345</sup> *PGM* 5:335.

<sup>346</sup> *PGM* 5:335.

<sup>347</sup> *GMP* 5:314-336.

<sup>348</sup> *GMP* 7:429.

<sup>349</sup> *GMP* 7: 429-430.

<sup>350</sup> Cf. part 2.2.



production of curse tablets,<sup>351</sup> and contains instructions for loosing (λύω) the binding formula.<sup>352</sup> The formula is addressed to “lord Osiris”:

A restraining [κάτοχος] [rite] for anything, works even on chariots. It also causes enmity / and sickness, cuts down, destroys, and overturns, for [whatever] you wish. The spell [in it],<sup>353</sup> when said, conjures [ὀρκίζω] daimons [out] and makes them enter [objects or people]. Engrave in a plate [made] of lead from a cold-water channel what you want to happen...throw it into the stream—or into the sea...The text to be written is: “I conjure [ὀρκίζω] you, lord Osiris, by your holy names OUCHIŌCH OUSENARATH, Osiris...I give over to you [παραδίδωμί σοι], lord Osiris, and I deposit [παρακατατίθεμαι] with you this matter /” (add the usual).<sup>354</sup>

Lord Osiris is adjured—put under oath—<sup>355</sup> and the matter is placed in his authority (as is indicated by the use of παραδίδωμι<sup>356</sup> and παρακατατίθεμαι<sup>357</sup>). Osiris is to carry out the binding matter.

In this part (2.4), we have explored the *GMP*, which was the anchor of not only Deissmann’s reading of verse 5 (cf. part 1.1.3), but of many subsequent exegetes (in particular, cf. 1.1.8). As Deissmann noted, παραδίδωμι formulae do feature in *GMP*. However, it is clear that the occurrence of this term is not as prevalent as in the lead tablets we examined in part 2.2.2.1. There is a clear functional continuity between the presence of παραδίδωμι in *GMP*, and its occurrence in lead tablets centuries earlier.

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<sup>351</sup> *GMP* 7:432.

<sup>352</sup> *PGM* 7:438-440.

<sup>353</sup> The Greek is simply ὁ δὲ λόγος (*PGM* 7:431).

<sup>354</sup> *GMP* 7:429-450 (emphasis added).

<sup>355</sup> Cf. part 2.1.3.

<sup>356</sup> Cf. our discussion of παραδίδωμι in relation to lead tablet binding curse formulae in part 2.2.3.1.

<sup>357</sup> Cf. *PGM* 4:355 in which a binding spell is “entrusted”, or given over to the authority of the chthonic gods to enact.

## 2.5 (Binding) Curses in *Sepher ha-Razim*

The Jewish *Sepher ha-Razim* was reconstructed by Mordecai Margalioth<sup>358</sup> and translated into English by Michael Morgan following the discovery of fragments from the Cairo Genizah in 1963.<sup>359</sup> Margalioth dated *Sepher ha-Razim*, which is most likely of Palestinian origin,<sup>360</sup> to the early fourth or late third century C. E.,<sup>361</sup> although others argue for a later date.<sup>362</sup> Whilst *Sepher ha-Razim* is dated centuries later than some of the metal (binding) curse tablet formulae we have considered (see part 2.2), it contains linguistic phraseology and thought-forms that resonate with a long history of formulae evidenced in some of the extant material we are considering in this part.<sup>363</sup> On this basis, Gager rightly states that, like *PGM*,<sup>364</sup> *Sepher ha-Razim* contains “individual

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<sup>358</sup> M. Margalioth (ed.), *Sepher ha-Razim: A Newly Recovered Book of Magic from the Talmudic Period* (Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1966).

<sup>359</sup> M. A. Morgan, *Sepher ha-Razim: The Book of the Mysteries*, Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1983, 1. Cf. Alexander for an assessment of Margalioth’s reconstructive work: the *Sepher ha-Razim* (“Sefer ha-Razim”, 170-190 at 170-174; 184-190).

<sup>360</sup> P. S. Alexander, “Sefer Ha-Razim and the Problem of Black Magic in Early Judaism,” in T. E. Klutz (ed.), *Magic in the Biblical World: From the Rod of Aaron to the Ring of Solomon (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement 245)*; London: T & T Clark, 2003), 170-190 at 188.

<sup>361</sup> Morgan, *Sepher*, 8.

<sup>362</sup> Alexander (“Sefer ha-Razim”, 170-190 at 188) considers Margalioth’s dating “too precise, and probably too early. The evidence suggests that the original form of *Sefer ha-Razim* was composed in the fifth or sixth centuries CE, probably more towards the end of this period than the beginning. The place of composition, on linguistic grounds, is most likely to have been Palestine.”

<sup>363</sup> The *Sepher ha-Razim* is written in “midrashic Hebrew containing hardly any Aramaic...[it] is however inlaid with transliterated Greek words—some of which are *termini technici* of Greek magic—as well as a short Greek prayer” (Ch. Merchavya, “Sefèr Ha-Razim”, *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 13 [Jerusalem: Keter, 1971], 1594-1595 at 1594).

<sup>364</sup> Lightstone outlines the relationship between *Sepher ha-Razim* and *PGM*: “Many of the Greek Magical Papyri have, to be sure, been thought to be informed by Judaism, and, in turn, to have influenced the writer of *Sefer Ha Razim*” (J. Lightstone, “Christian Anti-Judaism in its Judaic Mirror: The Judaic Context of Early Christianity Revised” in S. G. Wilson [ed.], *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity: Separation and Polemic* [vol. 2; Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986], 103-132 at 109). Again, Gruenwald mirrors Lightstone’s assessment: “The nature and scope of that literature [*Sepher ha-Razim*] in Hebrew does not fall short of the parallel Greek magical papyri and the Aramaic Incantation Bowls” (I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980], 225). Gruenwald resists the conception of *Sepher ha-Razim* as a “mere Hebrew imitation” of *PGM*. Instead, he rightly concludes that *Sepher ha-Razim* makes “an original contribution in the history of magical literature” (Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, 231).

Gruenwald’s contextualisation of *Sepher ha-Razim* with a wider tradition of magic is persuasive. Morgan (*Sepher*, 11) rightly concludes that,



spells and recipes [that] are no doubt earlier” than the date of their final compiled form.<sup>365</sup>

The *אני מוסר* formulae we will consider resonate strongly with the convention, *παραδίδωμί σοι*, we encountered in part 2.2.<sup>366</sup> The language of handing over is contextualised within a discussion of the “six firmaments” that structure this work. Troupes of angels are attached to the “firmaments” and “subdivisions”:<sup>367</sup> “For each subdivision there is a magical praxis described which can be initiated by calling upon the angels listed in that subdivision and by following the prescribed rites.”<sup>368</sup> Individuals are handed over to such angels: they are transferred to an angelic being, that they might suffer physical harm.<sup>369</sup>

The angels in the “second encampment” are described as those “who have been put in charge of every matter of combat and war”; they are “full of anger and wrath...[and] are

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Magic was the common property of the people of the Greco-Roman world. The praxeis could have arisen in any part of that world and have been initially preserved in any part of that world. To attempt to locate a single place of origin would be futile. Furthermore, we should not attempt to place the magical praxeis of SHR within any specific group. The praxeis are part of the popular religion of the age. Jews who could place a mosaic of Helios on their synagogue floors certainly could not have found it strange to offer invocations to that same god.

<sup>365</sup> Gager, *Curse*, 106.

<sup>366</sup> As Jordan (“Agora”, 241) rightly notes in relation to the binding curses from the Athenian Agora:

From the Hebrew composition known as the *Sepher ha-Razim*, a collection of magical spells taken from various sources and set into a Jewish cosmological framework, we may also compare some striking parallels to our texts’ *παραδίδωμί σοι... ἵνα* (or *ὅπως*) constructions.

Jordan mentions the formulae contained in Morgan, *Sepher*, 27, 49. See also Jordan, “Agora”, 243.

<sup>367</sup> The seventh, and final, “firmament” describes the throne of glory.

<sup>368</sup> Morgan, *Sepher*, 7.

<sup>369</sup> Cf. Alexander (“Sefer ha-Razim”, 170-190 at 189) who notes the shocking nature of this Jewish text: “The one thing that is genuinely surprising about it [*Sepher ha-Razim*] is that the magic contained in it is so often black, that is, it is aimed at inflicting harm on individuals.”

prepared to torment and torture a man to death”:<sup>370</sup>

There is no mercy in them but they (wish) only to take revenge and to punish him who is delivered [שנמסר בידם] into their hands.<sup>371</sup>

The text continues by elaborating further on some of the potential maleficence to which the angels can be directed:

And if you wish to send them against your enemy, or against your creditor, or to capsize a ship, or to fell a fortified wall, or against any business of your enemies, to damage and destroy, whether you desire to exile him, or to make him bedridden, or to blind him or to lame him [להאסירו ברגליו]<sup>372</sup>, or to grieve him in any thing (do as follows).<sup>373</sup>

A rite involving water,<sup>374</sup> “unfired pottery vessels” (which are to be broken), and a “glass vial” follows,<sup>375</sup> an act which resonates with Tanakh<sup>376</sup> and *PGM*.<sup>377</sup> The angels are called upon to receive the victim handed over to them (“accept from my hand at this time that which I throw to you”) to be cursed:

HHGRYT who dwell in the east, SRWKYT who dwell in the north, <sup>C</sup>WLPH who dwell in the west, KEDY who dwell in the south, accept from my hand at this time that which I throw to you, to affect N son of N, to break his bones, to crush all his limbs, and to shatter his conceited power, as these pottery vessels are broken. And may there be no recovery for him just as there is no repair for these pottery vessels.<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>370</sup> Morgan, *Sepher*, 25. Margalioth, *Sepher ha-Razim*, 69 (lines 46-49).

<sup>371</sup> Morgan, *Sepher*, 26. Margalioth, *Sepher ha-Razim*, 69 (line 48). Cf. Job 1:12; 2:6 (which we will discuss in part 3.4.2.2).

<sup>372</sup> Margalioth, *Sepher ha-Razim*, 69 (line 51). As Morgan (*Sepher*, 26 n. 10) notes, this literally means “to bind his feet”. As such, it attests the well-established connection of binding curses as the cause of some physical disabilities and diseases.

<sup>373</sup> Morgan, *Sepher*, 26. Margalioth, *Sepher ha-Razim*, 69 (lines 48-51).

<sup>374</sup> Cf. the role of water in Numbers 5:19, 22-24, 26-27. See part 2.1.3.

<sup>375</sup> Morgan, *Sepher*, 26.

<sup>376</sup> Cf. Jeremiah 19:1-15.

<sup>377</sup> *PGM* 4:222; 3210.

<sup>378</sup> Morgan, *Sepher*, 27



As the “pottery” is “broken”, so sympathetically the one “thrown” to the angels must be smashed. Contrary to those who might wish to interpret this language figuratively, the formula that directly follows this adjuration seeks “death”. The following formula comprises part of a customisable formula which begins: “I deliver to you [מוסר אני], angels of anger and wrath, N son of N...”<sup>379</sup> It can be concluded with any of the following formulae:

- (1) “that you will strangle him and destroy him and his appearance, make him bedridden, diminish his wealth, annul the intentions of his heart, blow away his thought and his knowledge and cause him to waste away continually until he approaches death.”
- (2) To exile: “that you will exile him and banish him from his children and his home and he will have nothing left.”
- (3) To a creditor: “that you will plug his mouth and make his planning vain and he will not think of me, nor speak of me; and when I pass in front of him, he will not see me.”<sup>380</sup>
- (4) For a ship: “I adjure you angels of wrath and destruction, that you will rise up against the ship of N son of N and that you not permit it to sail from any place. But if wind (sufficient) for sailing come to it, then let (the wind) carry it out to sea and shake it (so it sinks) in the midst of the sea and let neither man nor cargo be saved from it.
- (5) To demolish a strengthened wall: “I adjure you, angels of fury, wrath, and anger, that you will go with the force of your power and fell the wall of N son of N. Smite it to dust and let it be overturned like the ruins of Sodom and Gemorah, and let no man place stone upon stone on the place (where the wall was); if it be built during the day, let it be overturned at night.”<sup>381</sup>

As Alexander notes, in *Sepher ha-Razim* “angels, shockingly, function like demons...there is no moral dimension to the ill that they are required to inflict.”<sup>382</sup> Other formulae in *Sepher ha-Razim* are similarly malevolent. In an elaborate prescription for afflicting an enemy with insomnia,<sup>383</sup> which includes the use of a “black dog that never saw light during its days [and a] strip of (lead) pipe upon which to inscribe the request, the following formula is to be uttered”:<sup>384</sup>

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<sup>379</sup> Margalioth, *Sepher ha-Razim*, 70 (line 63).

<sup>380</sup> Morgan, *Sepher*, 27. Cf. Jordan, “Agora”, 241.

<sup>381</sup> Morgan, *Sepher*, 27-28. Margalioth, *Sepher ha-Razim*, 70 (line 63-76).

<sup>382</sup> Alexander, “Sefer ha-Razim”, 170-190 at 179.

<sup>383</sup> Cf. *PGM* 4:2943.

<sup>384</sup> We noted the common use of lead inscribed with various formulae in part 2.2. In Jewish



I hand over to you [מוסר אני] angels of disquiet who stand upon the fourth step, the life [נפש] and the soul [נשמה] and the spirit [רוח] of N son of N so that you may tie him in chains of iron and bind [אטר] him to a bronze yoke. Do not give sleep, nor slumber, nor drowsiness to his eyelids; let him weep and cry like a woman at childbirth, and do not permit any (other) man to release him (from this spell).<sup>385</sup>

This binding<sup>386</sup> curse hands over a man to angels in order to be bound. Furthermore, the victim is to experience physical suffering in the form of loss of sleep—to the extent of

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tradition, the use of lead is also attested in the following curse from a magic book in the Cairo Genizah:

(14) Another (charm). There should be written on a sheet of lead and buried (15) in the house which you desire. This is what should be written: (16) "This writing is designated for X b. Y, that he may melt and drip (17) and groan and be cast away on a sick-bed. In the name of 'w 'w (18) nwq'k qhtk qdytk 'plwq 'w 'w (19) kyt'wn wš'qsw šmw (Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets*, 233).

<sup>385</sup> Morgan, *Sepher*, 49. Margalioth, *Sepher ha-Razim*, 84 (line 64-66).

<sup>386</sup> Cf. the following references to general binding actions in Jewish tradition: in Tanakh, knowledge of binding spells is attested in Deuteronomy 18:11; Psalm 58:5; and Isaiah 47:9, 12 (cf. Jeffers, *Magic*, 31-35). In Tobit 3:17 Raphael binds the demon Asmodeus; in Tobit 8:3, Raphael pursues a demon and binds him. See also 3 Maccabees 6:19-21; 1 Enoch 7:6; 10:4; 10:15; 13:1; 14:4; Jubilees 5:6; 10:7-11; Testament of Solomon 28; 51; 58; Testament of Levi 18:10-12; Job 38:31; Mesopotamian Bowl 8:

Bound [רסר] are the demons, sealed are the dēvs, bound [רסר] are the idol-spirits, sealed are the evil liliths, male and female, bound [רסר] bound [רסר] is the evil eye away from the house of Khwadāy son of Pālī from this day to eternity. Bound [רסר] is the evil eye from the house of Khwadāy son of Pālī, from his house and from his..., (and) from...and from Ādur-dukh and from her sons from this day to eternity. Amen, Amen, Selah (Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets*, 173).

Cf. Mesopotamian incantation bowl 12a (Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets*, 193); Amulet 18 (Naveh and Shaked, *Magic*, 57), 28 (Naveh and Shaked, *Magic*, 97); Bowl 14 (Naveh and Shaked, *Magic*, 113), 16 (Naveh and Shaked, *Magic*, 118) 20 (Naveh and Shaked, *Magic*, 126), 23 (Naveh and Shaked, *Magic*, 132), 25 (Naveh and Shaked, *Magic*, 138) 26 (Naveh and Shaked, *Magic*, 139-140).

Matthew 18:18 mentions both δέω and λύω, although the context is more opaque than the following Markan examples (cf. R. H. Hiers, "“Binding” and “Loosing” The Matthean Authorization", *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 104 [1985], 233-250). In Mark 5:3 a demoniac is bound (δέω). As Marcus rightly notes, "These attempts [to bind the demoniac] may reflect not only an effort to prevent the demoniac from harming himself but also magical practices...Demons themselves “bind” people...and so our passage may contain an element of irony: the world’s method for dealing with those whom Satan has enchained is to tie them up further" (J. Marcus, *Mark 1-8* [The Anchor Bible 27, New York: Doubleday, 1999], 343). In Mark 7:34-35, following the utterance of the word "Ephphatha", a man who was deaf and mute is healed; his ears are "opened" and his tongue is "loosed [λύω]." Luke 13:16 recounts a healing of a crippled woman in which her infirmity is attributed to Satan’s binding for the past eighteen years: "And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham who Satan bound [δέω] for eighteen years, be loosed [λύω] from this bond [δεσμοῦ] on the Sabbath day?" In Revelation 20:1-3, Satan is bound (δέω) by an angel and later loosed (λύω).



“cry[ing] like a woman at childbirth”.<sup>387</sup> The angels adjured can “withhold sleep from men, and they can do good or do evil.”<sup>388</sup>

We have seen that the phraseology and thought-form of *Sepher ha-Razim* resonates with a wider cross-cultural tradition of (binding) curses in the ancient world, across a broad geographical range, and over a period of centuries. A common tradition of cursing is in evidence in the material we have considered in part two (Tanakh, curse tablets and binding spells, Dead Sea Scrolls, *PGM*, *Sepher ha-Razim*). In a particular resonance with the Greek tradition of binding (curses),<sup>389</sup> the phrase מוסר אני features in *Sepher ha-Razim* in a manner that echoes the various παραδίδωμί σοι formulae (and the other comparable terminology we considered).

## 2.6 Conclusion

We have explored a range of curse material, spanning a wide geographical area, and covering centuries of ancient history. Our study began with a consideration of Tanakh (in part 2.1), through which we were able to establish our working definitions of the terms “curse” and “magic”—a critical failure of previous scholars (cf. part one).

We defined the generic term “curse” as a word, form of words, or action that expresses a desire for physical harm to befall another (that is, when “curse” is used transitively), which calls into play a metaphysical power. We noted that in the context of the ancient world it was anticipated that self-operative, supernatural, or divine agency would enact

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<sup>387</sup> Morgan, *Sepher*, 49.

<sup>388</sup> Morgan, *Sepher*, 49.

<sup>389</sup> Cf. parts 2.2 and 2.4.

a curse—transforming it from an expression of abuse or ill intent, into a potent force for harm.

In relation to Tanakh, we explored several types of curse which emerged from our study of various curse narratives: “unconditional” curses (in part 2.1.2); “conditional” (self-) curses, “oaths”, and “adjuratory” curses (in part 2.1.3); and “imprecatory” curses (in part 2.1.4). This study demonstrated a diverse Jewish curse tradition contained within Tanakh, which related to a variety of social contexts.

In part 2.2, we considered Graeco-Roman “curse tablets” and “binding spells”. Following a thorough definition of terms (in part 2.2.1.1), which was required due to the level of confusion in scholarly discourse surrounding the use of these words (cf. part 2.2.1), we explored “technical” and “legal” binding curse formulae. We noted the use of a diverse range of Greek and Latin terms (including παραδίδωμι) which function to hand over a matter, or individual, to a supernatural, or divine, agent. Such language, which spanned centuries and was not specific to any particular geographical location, we argued represents a wider common language of cursing in which a victim is placed under the authority of a supernatural, or divine, agent.

In binding spells, the handing over of a matter, or person (by an individual or group) to the authority of a deity meant that the god was to carry out the binding spell. Similarly in binding curses, the deity was to execute the curse. In other instances, we noted that a gravestone was given to a chthonic deity—given over to his authority—neither to curse, nor to bind, but to guard. As such, παραδίδωμι (and the plethora of verbs that function in a similar manner in the context of binding and cursing) does not signal a



curse *per se*. However, it can be indicative of the presence of a curse, if the *wider context* permits such a reading.

In part 2.3, we considered the tradition of cursing within the Dead Sea Scrolls. We noted the liturgical and communal function of cursing (which ensured purity within the group), and also the use of cursing in relation to the expulsion of miscreant members. Whilst modified to the needs of the community, biblical curse material also featured. The victim of cursing in the Dead Sea Scrolls was invariably Belial and his minions, who, through divine agency, were damned.

Our study of cursing in the *Greek Magical Papyri* (in part 2.4) revealed instances of “hand over” (in particular, παραδίδωμι) phraseology that resonated with many of the binding curses we considered in part 2. As such, the charge of anachronism against those who interpret 1 Corinthians 5:5 in the light of this material is unfounded. Furthermore, critics rejection of these papyri as “pagan” (by which they mean un-Jewish), was also found to be unwarranted. As we noted, the various magical papyri are culturally diverse, with echoes of Jewish tradition.

The Jewish *Sepher ha-Razim* (cf. part 2.5) cements many of our conclusions concerning *GMP*. Although written in Hebrew, the “hand over” (מוסר אני) formulae it contains demonstrate a continuity with centuries of cursing. Moreover, it attests a more general cross-cultural—Jewish and Graeco-Roman—tradition of cursing in which a victim is “handed over” to the authority of a supernatural, or divine, agent to suffer harm.

Cursing was in evidence in all parts of Paul’s cultural milieu. In our detailed study of 1 Corinthians 5:5 (in part 3), we will employ this insight as we seek to reformulate the

curse interpretation. We will argue that this cross-cultural tradition resonates with Paul's words: παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ. In a departure from many traditional curse readings, we will resist the claim that a "parallel" exists between Paul's use of παραδίδωμι and the *GMP* (or other curse material). At its most extreme, such language can erroneously imply literary dependence. Exegetes who approach Paul's letters from this perspective, often adopt a forensic approach. Thus, they sift the data for an unspecified number of textual correspondences (as we have seen, scholars disagree how many points of contact are required, or what constitutes their data), at which point a "parallel" is established.

We will approach 1 Corinthians 5 from a different angle. Rather than highlighting alleged individual curse terminology (such as παραδίδωμι) which can be designated a parallel, we shall seek to understand the overall tenor of Paul's argument. We will contextualise 1 Corinthians 5 within the context of cursing from the outset of chapter 5, and will demonstrate that Paul's words in verse 5 bear a conceptual resonance with the common language of cursing in the ancient world.



## Part three: The Curse Interpretation—Reformulated

AN “evil” 16th-century curse inscribed on a giant stone in Cumbria - the centrepiece of a £6.7 million millennium exhibition - is to be “exorcised” by an archbishop after clergy complained that it generated “spiritual violence”...One clergyman has even suggested that it could have contributed to the foot and mouth epidemic in Cumbria.<sup>1</sup>

In part one, we critically surveyed nearly two millennia of reception history of Paul’s enigmatic words in 1 Corinthians 5:5. Our study was heuristically structured within two broad—yet divergent—categories: curse and magic interpretations of παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ (in part 1.1), and non-curse and/or non-magic readings of verse 5 (in part 1.2).

For Tertullian (cf. part 1.1.1), we saw that παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός constitutes a Pauline command to curse the errant Corinthian, who Tertullian anticipates will suffer death. We concluded that his reading was anachronistic, as Tertullian viewed verse 5 through the lens of a second century discussion of penitence. Despite this significant weakness, we noted that his basic curse and death reading is echoed by modern scholars within the *History of Religions School* (cf. parts 1.1.2-1.1.4). For example, Dobschütz also argues in favour of a curse in the form of “sudden death”,<sup>2</sup> whilst Conzelmann categorically states that: “The destruction of the flesh can hardly mean anything else but death” (cf. part 1.1.4).<sup>3</sup>

Deissmann’s influential interpretation (cf. part 1.1.3), which we considered to be a fine example of the *History of Religions School’s* approach to the interpretation of verse 5,

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<sup>1</sup> J. Petre, “Archbishop to lift “evil” curse linked to foot and mouth”, <http://news.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2001/11/04/nfnm04.xml>, 4 November 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Dobschütz, *Christian Life*, 46. Although, as we noted, he ultimately expected the errant Corinthian to repent and be readmitted to the Corinthian community (cf. part 1.1.2).

<sup>3</sup> Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 97.

understands Paul's instruction in relation to "the language of magic" within the specific context of "pagan execrations".<sup>4</sup> A characteristic of readings like Deissmann's is that they frequently identify so-called "parallels" or "influences" between various extra-Pauline curse texts, or traditions, and verse 5 (particularly within the Greek tradition).

However, we argued that this language, like many other terms employed in such readings, is ambiguous and underdetermined. Moreover, it is frequently unclear what is meant by scholars' use of the terms: "curse", "magic", "parallel", "influence", and "background". The ambiguity that arises from this imprecision, we argued, seriously weakens the various articulations of the curse interpretation. Moreover, it has doubtless contributed to the failure of this reading to convince some contemporary scholars. Critically, we suggested that the stress upon Greek "influence" within Pauline thought is often at the expense of his Jewish cultural heritage—Tanakh.

In contrast to Dobschütz and Deissmann, we examined Forkman (cf. part 1.1.5) who focuses upon cursing in Tanakh, and concludes that 1 Corinthians 5:5 is a "devotion" (Wiles reasons similarly [cf. part 1.1.6]). Like Dobschütz, we saw that Forkman combines the concepts of exclusion (the primary focus of his study) and cursing in his interpretation of verse 5. Unlike Dobschütz and Deissmann, we considered the chief weakness of Forkman's argument to be his lack of attention to "pagan" cursing, by an unquestioning reliance upon Deissmann and Conzelmann.

Yarbro Collins' interpretation of verse 5, which we noted has been particularly influential in recent times, featuring repeatedly in subsequent writers consideration of this passage (cf. part 1.1.8). Following Deissmann (and aided by Betz whom she

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<sup>4</sup> Deissmann, *Light*, 301-302.



consulted<sup>5</sup>), we saw that Yarbro Collins argues that there are “formal parallels” between *GMP* and verse 5. As such, παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ is drawn from the context of ancient Greek magic. She cites many familiar scholars from the *History of Religions School*, and, we argued, shares many of the weakness of their arguments. For example, her language is underdetermined (“magic”, “curse”, “parallel”, “formal parallel”, and “real parallel”), and she relies upon *GMP*—the same evidence cited by Dobschütz and Deissmann eighty years previous (despite the wealth of material that has been unveiled since then [cf. in particular, part 2.2]).

Many of these critical failings in the curse interpretation are seized upon by those scholars who advocate a non-curse reading (in part 1.2). However, whilst such scholars rightly noted the weakness of curse and magic readings, rather than attempt to reformulate a more satisfactory interpretation, many opted for an equally unpersuasive understanding of verse five in terms of exclusion and physical suffering (in part 1.2.2), or exclusion alone (in part 1.2.3).

Whilst, as we saw, Chrysostom (cf. part 1.2.1.1) makes no reference to cursing or magic in his interpretation of verse 5, he does understand εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός in terms of physical suffering (although not death). Most crucially, in light of this, we argued that whilst physical suffering is consistent with the desired consequences of many curses, the experience of physical suffering does not *necessarily* denote the existence of a curse. As such, advocates of the curse interpretation cannot point solely to εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός as the basis of their reading.<sup>6</sup> Instead, they must find a means of

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<sup>5</sup> Yarbro Collins, “Function”, 256 n. 9.

<sup>6</sup> We have noted that there is not only confusion over the definition of “curse”, but over what constitutes a “curse” in 1 Corinthians 5:5. Whilst some scholars interpret the phrase παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ in terms of cursing, we saw that others maintain that εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός, or

attributing ὀλεθρον τῆς σαρκός to the concept of cursing. In our pursuit of a more satisfactory curse interpretation in this part, we will argue for a curse understanding of εἰς ὀλεθρον τῆς σαρκός by anchoring this phrase in a curse reading of παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ.

Barrett's reading (in part 1.2.1.2) mistakenly rules out *LMP* (now contained in *GMP*), due to the lack of conceptual correspondence in every detail (namely, concerning the role of Satan). Physical suffering features in Barrett's reading. However, as we remarked, it is not interpreted in terms of curse. Murphy-O'Connor's interpretation (in part 1.2.2) was shown to be seriously anachronistic and theologically partisan.<sup>7</sup> Unlike Barrett, he envisaged psychological distress rather than physical suffering.

Calvin's understanding (cf. part 1.2.3.1) of verse 5, as we demonstrated, is perhaps the most influential on modern exegetes who reject a curse and/or magic reading. Using 2 Corinthians 2 as his intertext, Calvin argues that παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ is a metaphor for excommunication, for the church is Christ's domain, whilst Satan rules that sphere outside the church. However, like Tertullian, we argued that Calvin's reading is tailored to his contemporary political situation. His failure to recognise adequately the cross-cultural language of cursing, and in particular the common "hand over" phraseology associated with cursing, cannot be levied against him—for, whilst this is a failure in his understanding—he writes centuries before the *History of Religions* movement that would highlight this material.

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a combination of the two clauses (παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ εἰς ὀλεθρον τῆς σαρκός), indicates the presence of a curse.

<sup>7</sup> Whilst objectivity is not achievable, this does not preclude one endeavouring to be self-critical, and then explicit, concerning one's presuppositions.



Whilst variation exists between Fee (cf. part 1.2.3.2), Thiselton (cf. part 1.2.3.4), and Garland (cf. part 1.2.3.5), we showed that they are united in their advocacy of an exclusion-only reading of verse 5 (of which, Calvin's articulation is most influential). Furthermore, we demonstrated that South (cf. part 1.2.3.3), whose work post-dates Fee's, has had a significant impact on contemporary exponents of an exclusion-only reading (most likely due to his extended defence of this position).<sup>8</sup> However, his dismissal of *GMP* on the basis of dating was shown to be misleading, his interpretation of 2 Corinthians 2 in the light of 1 Corinthians 5 was unconvincing, and his explicit theological commitment to the use of Pauline disciplinary practices in the contemporary church appeared to drive his conclusions.

As such, we considered both curse, and non-curse, interpretations alike to be unconvincing. Whilst greater merit was to be found in the curse interpretation, due to its compelling supposition that the language of παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ was a part of the cadence of magic or cursing, in its current formulation such a curse reading was unconvincing.

In part two, our study began with an examination of Tanakh (in part 2.1), through which we established our working definitions of the terms "curse" and "magic". We defined the generic term "curse" as a word, form of words, or action that expresses a desire for physical harm to befall another (that is, when "curse" is used transitively), which calls into play a metaphysical power. We argued that in the context of the ancient world it was anticipated that self-operative, supernatural, or divine agency would enact a

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<sup>8</sup> Most recently, cf. May (*Body*, 5 n. 12), who advocates an exclusion-only position, cites South's response to Yarbrow Collins magic reading. This single reference (which is unelaborated) in May's work is symptomatic of a more general confidence amongst scholars that curse and magic readings have been discredited, and that it is no longer necessary to argue against such readings.

curse—transforming it from an expression of abuse or ill intent, into a potent force for harm.

Concerning Tanakh, we explored several types of curse which emerged from our study of various curse narratives: “unconditional” curses (in part 2.1.2); “conditional” (self-) curses, “oaths”, and “adjuratory” curses (in part 2.1.3); and “imprecatory” curses (in part 2.1.4). This study demonstrated a diverse Jewish biblical curse tradition.

In part 2.2, we considered Graeco-Roman “curse tablets” and “binding spells”. Following our definition of terms (in part 2.2.1.1), we examined “technical” and “legal” binding curse formulae. We concluded that the use of language such as παραδίδωμι (and a variety of other terms) in this context suggested a wider common language of cursing, in which a victim is placed under the authority of a supernatural, or divine, agent.

In part 2.3, we considered the tradition of cursing within the Dead Sea Scrolls. We noted the liturgical and communal function of cursing (which ensured purity within the group), and also the use of cursing in relation to the expulsion of miscreant members. Our study of cursing in the *Greek Magical Papyri* (in part 2.4) revealed instances of “hand over” (in particular, παραδίδωμι) phraseology that resonated with many of the binding curses we considered in part 2, whilst our consideration of the Jewish *Sepher ha-Razim* (cf. part 2.5) cemented many of our conclusions concerning *GMP*.

Although written in Hebrew, the “hand over” (מוסר אני) formulae it contains demonstrate a continuity with the παραδίδωμι curse terminology (and other related words) we examined in part 2.2. As such, we concluded that a more general cross-



cultural—Jewish and Graeco-Roman—tradition of cursing existed in which a victim is “handed over” to the authority of a supernatural, or divine, agent to suffer harm.

Having carried out a comprehensive study of the reception history of verse 5, which highlighted the inadequacy of both curse, and non-curse, readings (in part one); and explored in detail Jewish, Greek, and Roman curse traditions (in part two), we are in a position to offer a fresh and strengthened curse interpretation. In particular, we will rebut the main criticisms of the curse reading of 1 Corinthians 5:5, highlighted in part one, by drawing upon our research contained in part two.

### **3.1 Reformulating the Curse Interpretation**

The thesis of this present study is that in 1 Corinthians 5, Paul calls for the cursing and exclusion of a sexually immoral Corinthian. Furthermore, the phrase παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ contains an *implicit* curse, due to its resonance with the cross-cultural tradition of cursing, and because of Satan’s role in causing physical suffering and death; whilst Paul’s words εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός make this curse *explicit*. The errant Corinthian is a threat to the purity, or holiness, of the community, and his sin must cease—or it will place the whole community in peril. Contrary to Rosner,<sup>9</sup> Paul’s thought is not anchored solely in the Jewish (Greek) Scriptures, but reflects his wider Jewish and Graeco-Roman cultural milieu.

Unlike the curse interpretations we considered in part 1.1, we will contextualise 1 Corinthians 5 within the context of Deuteronomic cursing *from the outset* of Paul’s discussion in chapter 5 through an identification of γυνὴ πατρός in verse one (in part

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. B. S. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture & Ethics: A Study of 1 Corinthians 5-7* (Leiden; New York; Köln: E. J. Brill, 1994).

3.2.1). Furthermore, we will argue that γυνή πατρός also resonates with Leviticus 18 (in part 3.2.2) in which πορνεία with one's γυνή πατρός elicits a lethal “cutting off” (כרת). As such, the seeds of curse and exclusion (which we will note in part 3.2.1 are related concepts) are germinating within Paul's thought from the inception of chapter 5. In the following verses (2-13), Paul passes judgment upon the man: he is to be excluded *and* cursed.

The motif of exclusion permeates 1 Corinthians 5. Despite the debate surrounding the interpretation of ἵνα ἄρθῃ ἐκ μέσου ὑμῶν ὁ τὸ ἔργον τοῦτο πράξας in verse two, Paul's desire to see the man removed is not in dispute (cf. part 3.3.1). Again, in verses six to eight (cf. part 3.3.2), Paul reiterates his call for exclusion by employing Passover imagery. The errant Corinthian is “leaven” (ζύμη): an evil that infects the Corinthians' community just as leaven tainting a loaf of bread. Like the actions of Israel before the Passover, the Corinthians must purge their community of all “leaven” so that they reflect their sanctified state: “a new batch...unleavened” (ἄζυμοι).

In verses nine to eleven, Paul clarifies a misunderstanding that has arisen following his previous letter. He did not call upon the Corinthians to disassociate (not to mix: συναναμίγνυμαι) with τοῖς πόρνοις τοῦ κόσμου, but rather to disassociate from those who call themselves ἀδελφός. By implication, the Corinthians must break their association with the errant πόρνος, who “bears the name of” ἀδελφός. Finally, in verses twelve and thirteen, Paul concludes his discussion of the sexually immoral Corinthian by stating explicitly: ἐξάρατε τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν, a phrasing that resonates strongly with Deuteronomy, as we will demonstrate.

Cursing, in tandem with exclusion, informs Paul's thinking from the outset of chapter 5,



as the appropriate punishment for the incestuous Corinthian. Regardless of the various grammatical constructions of 1 Corinthians 5:3-5 (cf. part 3.4.1), our curse reading of verse 5 is unaffected by these construals. We will explore a number of linguistic resonances with παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ. In part 3.4.2.1, we will argue that whilst 1 Timothy 1:20 resonates with verse 5, in isolation its meaning is ultimately indeterminate. However, even when understood in terms of exclusion, a curse reading is not excluded from this passage. Moreover, in the light of verse 5, a compelling case can be made for understanding 1 Timothy 1:20 in terms of cursing.

Job 2:6 resonates strongly with 1 Corinthians 5:5 (cf. part 3.4.2.2). The mechanics of Job's affliction reside in his handing over to Satan, who afflicts him—directly and indirectly—with various forms of physical woe. In part 3.4.2.3, we will consider the suggestion that Paul's use of ἀνάθεμα (in terms of the concept of 𐤀𐤓𐤏) is akin to his use of παραδίδωμι in verse 5. Finally, in part 3.4.2.4, we will reconsider some of the Jewish and Graeco-Roman curse traditions within the context of verse 5,<sup>10</sup> in particular, the numerous examples of individuals who are handed over to the authority of a god or daimon to suffer various malevolent consequences (cf. part 2).

Since the outset of our study, we have suggested that a curse reading may be *implicit* in the words παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ, if one assumes that it is a part of Satan's nature to inflict malevolent consequences, such as physical suffering, upon the one placed into his authority. In part 3.4.3, we will substantiate this premise by considering Satan's relationship to human suffering.

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<sup>10</sup> Despite South's rejection of cursing, he makes the following valuable point: "Cultural analogues are important in establishing the social milieu in which Christianity existed and for reminding us that the concept of communal discipline was not a Pauline (or even a Christian) novelty" (South, *Disciplinary*, 7).

To transform παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ into an *explicit* curse, a qualification is required (cf. part 1.2.1.1). In this instance, Paul supplies the clarification: εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός. In part 3.4.4, we will argue that these words call for the physical destruction, and most likely the death of the Corinthian. Thus, the errant πόρνος is handed over to Satan’s authority to face physical destruction.

Paul conceives of a connection between sin and physical destruction elsewhere in 1 Corinthians. For example, in 1 Corinthians 3, he speaks of the one whose “work” is destroyed as suffering the “loss” of his “work”: “he himself will be saved, but only as through fire [οὕτως δὲ ὡς διὰ πυρός]” (verse 15). In verses 16-17, he talks metaphorically of the “destruction” of the community (ναός) through unholiness. As such, Paul links sin with physical suffering (by which, death is not precluded).

In his discussion of the Corinthians’ abuse of the Lord’s Supper (cf. part 3.4.4.2), Paul states that the Corinthians’ lack of “discernment” of the body is causing them to be judged: they are “weak”, “ill”, and some have “died” (verse 30). However, like the curse in 1 Corinthians 5, the judgment in 1 Corinthians 11 takes place so that they “may not be condemned along with the world” (verse 32).

Finally, in part 3.4.4.3, we will consider the Lukan account of Ananias and Sapphira, for it has been considered a “parallel” to 1 Corinthians 5. Whilst we will reject this understanding, this account does demonstrate a striking extra-Pauline connection between sin and physical suffering.

A discussion of the salvific aim of this curse concludes our study (cf. part 3.4.5). The



errant Corinthian has posed not only a problem for Paul, but for us also: for Paul's response appears to reconfigure ancient cursing. Whilst Paul's curse brings temporal suffering, its ultimate end—like the judgment of 1 Corinthians 11—is salvific (ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῇ [verse 5]).

### 3.2 *Curse, Exclusion, and Γυνὴ Πατρός: Biblical Allusions in 1 Corinthians 5*

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality [πορνεία] among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans [ἔθνη]; for a man is living with his father's wife [ὥστε γυναῖκά τινά τοῦ πατρὸς ἔχειν] (verse 1).

Having threatened the Corinthians with judgment (1 Corinthians 4:21), Paul accuses them of harbouring πορνεία in their midst (verse 1).<sup>11</sup> Many modern English translations render πορνεία as “immorality” or “sexual immorality”. However, in Classical Greek πορνεία refers specifically to prostitution; its root meaning being

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<sup>11</sup> In just a few verses, judgment deferred (1 Corinthians 4:21) becomes judgment pronounced (1 Corinthians 5:2). Some scholars view the alleged disconnection between chapters 4 and 5 as evidence of the disunity of 1 Corinthians (cf. M. M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* [Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993], 5). For example, de Boer posits two segments to Paul's letter: chapters 1-4 and 5-6 (M. C. de Boer, “The Composition of 1 Corinthians”, *New Testament Studies* 40 [1994], 229-245). However, there is no unity of agreement amongst scholars who argue for the disunity of 1 Corinthians. For example, Snyder distinguishes between chapters 7-16, which were written first *in toto*, and chapters 1-6 (G. F. Snyder, *First Corinthians*).

Contrary to de Boer et al., there are a number of thematic links between chapters 4 and 5 which point to the text's unity (cf. J. C. Hurd, *The Origin of 1 Corinthians* [2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Macon, Georgia: Mercer, 1983]). Firstly, Paul uses the term φυσιώω in both chapters (1 Corinthians 4:6, 19, 20 and in 5:2), which reveals his consistent thematic accusation against the Corinthians of “arrogance”. Again, δύναμις forms another thematic link between chapters 4 and 5, juxtaposing the supposed δύναμις of the ‘arrogant’ (1 Corinthians 4:19, 20) with the actual δύναμις “of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 5:4) (Fee, *Corinthians*, 194-196). One could add further examples: the theme of the Corinthians' καυχᾶσθαι (1 Corinthians 4:7; 5:6). Most obviously, the motif of judgment provides an immediate transition between chapters 4 and 5, and a wider contextual thread to chapters 4 to 6 (cf. the use of κρίνω in 1 Corinthians 4:3-5; 5:3; 5:12; 6:2-3). Despite the absence of κρίνω at the end of chapter 4, the theme of judgment is also present (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:18-21). Thus, the terms φυσιώω, δύναμις, καυχᾶσθαι and κρίνω all suggest that chapters 4 and 5 are much more thematically related than some imagine. Rather than the start of a new letter, chapter 5 continues many of the themes introduced in preceding chapters.

It could be argued that Paul crafts the stark transition between 1 Corinthians 4:21 and 5:1 as a rhetorical stratagem to catch the Corinthians unaware. Paul has employed such a strategy elsewhere. For example, in Romans 1 and 2, Paul indicts the Gentiles (Romans 1:20): “Just when Paul has his Jewish readers applauding him for his critique of the Gentiles, he turns to a category of person that he refers to as the πᾶς ὁ κρίνων” (G. P. Carras, “Romans 2,1-29: A Dialogue on Jewish Ideals”, *Biblica* 73:2 [1992], 183-207 at 191). Paul's critic is charged—and then revealed as his Jewish reader (Romans 2:17). As in Romans, so here in 1 Corinthians 5, Paul surprises his readers by pronouncing judgment even though absent from them (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:21 in which Paul offers the possibility of deferring judgment).



derived from the verb “to sell” (probably *περνάω*). The word *πορνεία* appears throughout New Testament literature. In particular, the term is used frequently in 1 Corinthians (especially in chapters 5-6),<sup>12</sup> second only to the book of Revelation.<sup>13</sup>

As in Classical Greek, *πορνεία* can denote prostitution in New Testament Greek. For example, consider the Great Prostitute (*πόρνη*) of the Apocalypse with whom the “Kings of the Earth” have committed *πορνεία* (Revelation 17:1-2). However, the New Testament use of *πορνεία* also encompasses a whole spectrum of “illicit” sexual behaviour. Thus, we must consider whether a specific or general use of the term best reflects Paul’s intention.

The interpreter’s task is aided in 1 Corinthians 5:1, for Paul qualifies the meaning of *πορνεία* as being “of a kind that is not found even among pagans [*ἔθνη*: Gentiles].” Paul moves from qualification to explanation, leaving the Corinthians in little doubt as to the focus of his accusation: *ὥστε γυναῖκά τινά τοῦ πατρὸς ἔχειν*, or literally: “someone has his father’s woman” (verse 1). Contained within this short Pauline clause is the identity of the nameless perpetrators of this very specific case of *πορνεία*,<sup>14</sup> and the seemingly axiomatic reason for Paul’s pronouncement of judgment (which occupies Paul in the remainder of this chapter).

The phrase *γυναῖκά τινά τοῦ πατρός* (literally: “woman a certain one of his father”) has been interpreted variously. Before we examine the different semantic possibilities,

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<sup>12</sup> 1 Corinthians 5:1, 5:9, 5:10, 5:11, 6:9, 6:13, 6:18, 7:2, 10:8.

<sup>13</sup> Revelation 2:14, 2:20, 2:21, 9:21, 14:8, 17:1, 17:2, 17:4, 18:3, 18:9, 19:2.

<sup>14</sup> Paul’s failure to name the offending individuals is puzzling; for how are the Corinthians to know whom to punish? One must assume that the couple’s identity was widely known to the Corinthians, or, at the least, Paul thought it was. There is another possibility, namely that Paul was personally ignorant of the offenders’ identity. Paul’s knowledge of this affair is second-hand. Already Paul has relied upon “Chloe’s people” for word of the dissention amongst the Corinthians (1:11). And now, Paul has “heard [*ἀκούειν*]” of a new concern (5:1). One must consider the possibility that Paul is also unaware of other key information.

In part 3.4.4.1, we will tentatively suggest that the errant Corinthian was a leader or teacher within the Corinthian community.



we can say with some certainty that πατήρ refers to the Corinthian offender's biological father. However, even here questions remain; not least whether or not the father is still alive.

Exegetes have offered several explanations of the woman's identity. Firstly, it is possible that the Corinthian man is committing sexual immorality (πορνεία) with his *biological mother* (who is his father's woman). Thus, in this instance πορνεία would refer to a clear case of incest. On the contrary, R. F. Collins argues that if the woman was actually the man's biological mother, Paul could have expressed this clearly by using the phrase "*heautou metera*, 'his own mother.'" <sup>15</sup> R. F. Collins argument is reasonable, yet not fully satisfactory: for Paul might be employing the phrase γυναῖκά τινά τοῦ πατρὸς to emphasise that the woman belongs to the father—she is not the Corinthian man's property. "*Heautou metera*" fails to convey this sentiment. <sup>16</sup>

Robertson and Plummer suggest that the woman might be the Father's concubine:

In the lowest classes of Roman society the *legal* line between marriage and concubinage was not sharply defined. <sup>17</sup>

However, a more specific term for concubine exists in the vocabulary of the Septuagint: παλλακίς. <sup>18</sup> This argument is further weakened if we subject it to the same criticism made of R. F. Collins' argument (above). Therefore, the identification of the woman as the father's concubine is unpersuasive, and can be discounted.

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<sup>15</sup> R. F. Collins, *First Corinthians* (Sacra Pagina Series Volume 7; D. J. Harrington [ed.], Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 209. Cf. Morris, *Corinthians*, 86.

<sup>16</sup> Chrysostom (*Homily 15*) makes a related point: "Wherefore also, as he goes on, he uses the same mode of speech, saying, 'Him who hath so done this thing:' and is again ashamed and blushes to speak out; which also we are wont to do in regard of matters extremely disgraceful. And he said not, 'his step-mother,' but, 'his father's wife;' so as to strike much more severely. For when the mere terms are sufficient to convey the charge, he proceeds with them simply, adding nothing."

<sup>17</sup> Robertson and Plummer, *First Epistle*, 96.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Genesis 35:22; 2 Samuel 3:7, 16:21, 16:22.

A third possibility is that the woman is not the man's biological mother, but his *stepmother*. Conzelmann argues in favour of this identification, adding that the man is actually married to his stepmother, following either the dissolution of his father's marriage to the woman through death or divorce:

The simplest explanation is that after the death of his father he has married the latter's widow, his stepmother. The present of ἔχειν, "have," points to a lasting state, marriage or concubinate (cf. 7:2, 29; Jn 4:18). Also conceivable is the fact that his father has secured a divorce and is still alive...Less likely also (in view of ἔχειν) is an adulterous relationship with his stepmother.<sup>19</sup>

However, whilst ἔχειν is qualified by "husband" (in John 4:18), thereby denoting marriage as the context, in verse one it is the use of πορνεία that primarily aids our interpretation. A man is behaving in a sexually immoral manner (πορνεία) by having (ἔχειν) his father's wife (γυνή πατρός). On the basis of the evidence we have considered thus far, we cannot say if they were married,<sup>20</sup> for whilst Paul only approves of sexual relations within the context of marriage—this is not a situation he approves of. Whilst the identification of γυνή πατρός in 1 Corinthians 5 is inconclusive, these terms will prove highly instructive for our wider exegesis of 1 Corinthians 5.

### 3.2.1 Γυνή Πατρός and Cursing—Deuteronomy 27:20

"Cursed [ארר: LXX, ἐπικατάρατος] be anyone who lies with his father's wife [בן אשת: LXX, γυνή πατρός], because he has violated his father's rights." All the people shall say, "Amen!" (Deuteronomy 27:20)<sup>21</sup>

Paul's thought in 1 Corinthians 5 can be located in the *context of cursing from the outset* of his discussion in chapter 5,<sup>22</sup> through a consideration of γυνή πατρός. This infrequent phrase resonates with only four verses in the Septuagint (Leviticus 18:8, 11;

<sup>19</sup> Conzelmann, *Corinthians*, 96.

<sup>20</sup> Although, given that marriage between a stepmother and a stepson was illegal in both Roman and Jewish law, it would seem unlikely.

<sup>21</sup> Deuteronomy 27:20. As in 1 Corinthians 5, the emphasis is upon the male perpetrator. In this context, the issue of male property rights is predominant (cf. Deuteronomy 22:1-30).

<sup>22</sup> This assertion stands in contrast to those scholars whose curse readings we critiqued in part one, due to their narrow focus upon verse 5 alone.



Deuteronomy 22:30 [LXX, 23:1]; 27:20).<sup>23</sup> Given the rarity of γυνή πατρός, Deuteronomy 27:20 would have resonated with Paul's consideration of the appropriate punishment for this specific instance of πορνεία in 1 Corinthians 5:5 (in concert with the other three references).<sup>24</sup> Paul's thought in 1 Corinthians 5 resonates more broadly with Deuteronomy.<sup>25</sup> As Garland notes:

Passages found in the Deuteronomic code anchor Paul's response to the misconduct. Incest is specifically condemned in Deut. 22:30; 27:20. The command to purge any evil from the midst of God's people is found in Deut. 13:5 [6]; 17:7; 19:19-20a; 21:21; 24:7. Appointing judges to render just decisions when disputes arise among the people is found in Deut. 16:18-20. A connection to prostitution is declared to be abhorrent to God in Deut. 23:17-18.<sup>26</sup>

Wisdom has observed that in relation to Paul's discussion of cursing in Galatians 3:10, "Several recent attempts to trace Paul's argument...and his use of scripture there have pointed to the significance of the context of Deuteronomy for our understanding Paul's intention."<sup>27</sup> As in Galatians, Deuteronomic cursing resonates strongly with Paul's thought in 1 Corinthians 5.

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<sup>23</sup> Γυναικὸς πατρός (Leviticus 18:8); γυναικὸς πατρός (Leviticus 18:11); γυναῖκα τοῦ πατρός (Deuteronomy 23:1 [LXX]); γυναικὸς τοῦ πατρός (Deuteronomy 27:20).

<sup>24</sup> Strikingly, Thiselton (*First Epistle*, 386) admits this possibility even though he rejects a curse reading of 1 Corinthians 5:5:

If the Roman world found such a union repulsive, the biblical-Jewish tradition decisively legislates against such a possibility...In Deut 27:20 it stands under the twelve "curses," and in Lev 18:8, 29, it invites the death penalty...Such judicial language, coupled with the "curse" speech-acts of Deuteronomy 27, provides one (not necessarily the only) important and intelligible background to Paul's judicial and exercitive language in 5:3-5.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. part 3.3 (and in particular part 3.3.4). Paul is clearly conversant with Deuteronomic cursing, as he quotes from Deuteronomy 27:26 in Galatians 3:10.

<sup>26</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 150. Cf. Rosner, *Paul*, 178:

when Paul regulates conduct in the churches, he is dependent on the Scriptures in general and on Deuteronomy, it appears, in particular...In the specific case of 1 Corinthians 5-7 at a remarkable number of points there are evident links with Deuteronomy (cf. Rosner, *Paul*, 82).

<sup>27</sup> J. R. Wisdom, *Blessing for the Nations and the Curse of the Law* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe 133, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 43.

In the book of Deuteronomy, the English term “curse” is rendered by the Hebrew words קללה (LXX: κατάρα),<sup>28</sup> אלה (LXX: ἀρά),<sup>29</sup> ארר (LXX: ἐπικατάρατος),<sup>30</sup> and חרם (LXX: ἀνάθεμα).<sup>31</sup> The theme of cursing is woven throughout Deuteronomy.<sup>32</sup> However, Deuteronomy 7, 11, 13, and 27-30 are concentrated curse material. Due to the occurrence of אשת אב (LXX: γυνή πατρός), we will focus our attention on chapter 27.

Deuteronomy 27 “consists of three sections, verses 1-8, 9-10, and 11-26.”<sup>33</sup> Verses 1-8 outline a “covenant ceremony”,<sup>34</sup> which is to take place upon arrival in Canaan. Stones are to be inscribed with the Second Law, and subsequently erected on Mount Ebal. Additionally, a stone altar is to be built upon which burnt and peace offerings are to be made to Yahweh (verses 2-7). Verses 9-10 reiterate the covenant status of Israel,<sup>35</sup> and their covenantal obligation of obedience to Yahweh.<sup>36</sup> It is this context that frames the pronouncement of the twelve curses (ארר: LXX, ἐπικατάρατος) in verses 15-26. The curses are pronounced along with blessings (ברך: LXX, εὐλογία), in a covenantal ceremony at which all the tribes of Israel are present:

The same day Moses charged the people as follows: When you have crossed over the Jordan, these shall stand on Mount Gerizim for the blessing of the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. And these shall stand on Mount Ebal for the

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<sup>28</sup> Deuteronomy 23:5-6.

<sup>29</sup> Deuteronomy 29:11, 13, 18; 30:7.

<sup>30</sup> Deuteronomy 27:15-26.

<sup>31</sup> Deuteronomy 20:17. For a discussion of חרם (LXX: ἀνάθεμα), see part 3.4.2.3.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Deuteronomy 1:34-37; 5:11, 18; 11:26-30; 13:6; 14:21; 17:14; 21:18-23; 23:4-6; 24:10; 25:9, 18; 27:11-26; 28:15-20, 25, 58; 29:9-21; 30:1, 7, 15, 19.

<sup>33</sup> J. H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy: The traditional Hebrew text with the new JPS translation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 246.

<sup>34</sup> Tigay (*Deuteronomy*, 247) rightly points to the similarities between Deuteronomy 27 and Exodus 24, and the presence of blessings and curses as evidence that this is a “covenant ceremony.”

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Deuteronomy 26:16-19. Beyond Deuteronomy, cf. Leviticus 26:1-46.

<sup>36</sup> Deuteronomy 27:10.



curse [קללה: LXX, κατάρα]: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.<sup>37</sup>

The exact nature of this tribal act is unclear.<sup>38</sup> The Levites function as liturgists in this covenant solemnisation, by declaring aloud to the Israelites twelve prohibitions—the violation of which results in a curse.<sup>39</sup> Each of the twelve liturgical pronouncements begins with the Levites' formulaic declaration "Cursed be [ארור]". Tigay explains this phenomenon by suggesting that "priests' and prophets' curses" were considered to be more powerful than others' curses:<sup>40</sup>

Cursed be [ארור: LXX, ἐπικατάρατος] anyone who makes an idol or cast an image, anything abhorrent to the LORD, the work of an artisan, and sets it up in secret." All the people shall respond, saying, "Amen!" (v. 15)<sup>41</sup>

Cursed be [ארור: LXX, ἐπικατάρατος] anyone who dishonors father or mother." All the people shall say, "Amen!" (v. 16)<sup>42</sup>

Cursed be [ארור: LXX, ἐπικατάρατος] anyone who moves a neighbor's boundary marker." All the people shall say, "Amen!" (v. 17)<sup>43</sup>

Cursed be [ארור: LXX, ἐπικατάρατος] anyone who misleads a blind person on the road." All the people shall say, "Amen!" (v. 18)<sup>44</sup>

Cursed be [ארור: LXX, ἐπικατάρατος] anyone who deprives the alien, the orphan, and the widow of justice." All the people shall say, "Amen!" (v. 19)<sup>45</sup>

Cursed be [ארור: LXX, ἐπικατάρατος] anyone who lies with his father's wife [אב אשת: LXX, γυνή πατρός], because he has violated his father's rights." All the people shall say, "Amen!" (v. 20)<sup>46</sup>

Cursed be [ארור: LXX, ἐπικατάρατος] anyone who lies with any animal." All the

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<sup>37</sup> Deuteronomy 27:11-13. Many scholars have noted a discrepancy between verses 12-13 and 14-26. Whereas it is the tribes who speak in verses 12-13, in verses 14-26 the Levites declare the ארור/ἐπικατάρατος formulae with the role of the Israelites reduced to crying "Amen". Whilst the argument in favour of viewing verses 12-13 as distinct from verses 14-26 is compelling, it has little impact on our overall exploration of cursing in verses 14-26.

Deuteronomy 11:29 also associates Gerizim with "curse" (LXX: κατάρα) and Ebal with "blessing" (LXX: εὐλογία). Cf. Joshua 8:33.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Joshua 8:30-35 for the enactment of this ceremony.

<sup>39</sup> Deuteronomy 27:14.

<sup>40</sup> Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 254. Cf. Numbers 6:22-27; 22:6; Deuteronomy 10:8; 21:5; 23:5; Joshua 13:22.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Deuteronomy 9:12 concerning the worship of images. The prohibition against idol worship is echoed elsewhere in Deuteronomy (4:16, 23, 25) and the other books of the Torah. In particular the Decalogue forbade the Israelites from having any other gods before the LORD or from making images (Exodus 20:4, 23; Leviticus 19:4, 26:1).

<sup>42</sup> This concern is echoed elsewhere in the Decalogue. Cf. Deuteronomy 5:16, 21:18-21; Exodus 20:12, 21:17; Leviticus 20:9.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Deuteronomy 19:14.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Leviticus 19:14.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Deuteronomy 24:17; Exodus 22:21-24, 23:9; Leviticus 19:33-34.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Deuteronomy 22:30.

people shall say, "Amen!" (v. 21)<sup>47</sup>

Cursed be [אָרוּר: LXX, ἐπικατάρατος] anyone who lies with his sister, whether the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother." All the people shall say, "Amen!" (v. 22)<sup>48</sup>

Cursed be [אָרוּר: LXX, ἐπικατάρατος] anyone who lies with his mother-in-law." All the people shall say, "Amen!" (v. 23)<sup>49</sup>

Cursed be [אָרוּר: LXX, ἐπικατάρατος] anyone who strikes down a neighbor in secret." All the people shall say, "Amen!" (v. 24)<sup>50</sup>

Cursed be [אָרוּר: LXX, ἐπικατάρατος] anyone who takes a bribe to shed innocent blood." All the people shall say, "Amen!" (v. 25)<sup>51</sup>

Cursed be [אָרוּר: LXX, ἐπικατάρατος] anyone who does not uphold the words of this law by observing them." All the people shall say, "Amen!" (v. 26).

Tigay's argument that sexual infractions (namely, sexual relations with one's γυνὴ πατρός and bestiality) are at the structural "core" of the twelve curses, makes the resonance between Deuteronomy 27 and 1 Corinthians 5 even more pronounced:

The twelve sins are arranged in a concentric structure: the core of the list deals with sexual crimes (vv. 20-23); before and after these are social sins (vv. 16-19, 24-25); and before and after the latter are sins pertaining to relations with God.<sup>52</sup>

In this context, the identity of the אִשָּׁה אֲבִי (LXX: γυνὴ πατρός) could be the man's stepmother or his mother (v. 20).<sup>53</sup> Tigay argues plausibly that marriage is not envisioned, as these laws concern secret and not public infractions.<sup>54</sup> Whilst this is uncertain, it is clear that sexual relations with one's γυνὴ πατρός (MT: אִשָּׁה אֲבִי) elicit a curse (אָרוּר: LXX, ἐπικατάρατος).

The אָרוּר formulae (LXX: ἐπικατάρατος) end with the response of the people: "Amen".<sup>55</sup> By their response, the Israelites consent to obey the respective law and

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Exodus 22:19; Leviticus 18:23, 20:15.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Leviticus 18:9; 20:17.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Leviticus 18:17; 20:14.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Exodus 20:13; 21:12; Leviticus 24:17.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Deuteronomy 16:19; Exodus 23:8.

<sup>52</sup> Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 254.

<sup>53</sup> Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 256.

<sup>54</sup> Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 256. Cf. Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Numbers 5:22; Nehemiah 5:13; Jeremiah 28:6; Shevuot 29b: "Answering 'Amen' after an oath is equivalent to pronouncing the oath with one's own mouth." Cf., Shevuot 36a; Num. R. 9:35; Deut. R. 7:1; Sot. 17a.

For a discussion of Hittite and Assyrian treaties, which resemble Israelite covenants, see G. E.



conditionally self-curse themselves, as part of a covenantal oath,<sup>56</sup> in the event of their disobedience.<sup>57</sup> The consequences of the curses in Deuteronomy 27 are contained in chapter 28 (verses 15-68), following a discussion of the blessings (verses 1-14) which follow from keeping the covenantal commandments:

In Deuteronomy 28, the...[וְכָל] rubric is supplemented by the areas in which the curse will be operative; in effect the passage expresses the ubiquity of the curse: in every enterprise connected with the necessities of life, fertility, and the conduct of the affairs of the polity.<sup>58</sup>

Various forms of calamity and physical affliction are characteristic of the results of these divinely enabled curses (“boils...ulcers...scurvy...itch of which you cannot be healed...madness, blindness, and confusion of mind” [verses 27-28]). Destruction (LXX: ἐξολεθρεύω) is the ultimate result of a lack of obedience:

The LORD will send upon you disaster, panic, and frustration in everything you attempt to do, until you are destroyed [LXX: ἐξολεθρεύω] and perish quickly, on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken me (v. 20)...The LORD will change the rain of your land into powder, and only dust shall come down upon you from the sky until you are destroyed [LXX: ἐκτρίβω] (v. 24). All these curses [קללה: LXX, κατάρα] shall come upon you, pursuing and overtaking you until you are destroyed [LXX: ἐξολεθρεύω], because you did not obey the LORD your God, by observing the

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Mendenhall, “Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition”, *Biblical Archaeologist* 17 (1959), 50-76 and D. J. Wiseman, *The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon*, British School of Archaeology in Iraq (London, 1958), 26.

Tigay (*Deuteronomy*, 253), commenting upon the social function of this ceremony, notes evidence of its lasting use in a sixth century C. E. synagogue:

Procedures of this type were used to impose norms of conduct on groups of people. An inscription in a circa sixth-century C.E. synagogue at Ein Gedi declares that whoever violates certain ethical rules of that community or reveals its trade secrets will be wiped out, along with his family, by God. The inscription alludes to a ceremony in which this oath was imposed, stating: “Let all the people say, ‘Amen.’”

The Deuteronomic cursing motif also recurs in ancient formulae. For example, consider the following burial inscription from Phrygia, in Asia Minor. Gager notes that the date inscribed upon the stone indicates that it is from 248-249 C. E.:

Aur(elios) Phrougianos, son of Mênokritos, and Aur(elia) Julianê (his) wife, to/for Makaria (his) mother and Alexandria (their) sweetest daughter, constructed (this) as a tomb while still living. If anyone after their placement/burial {if} should bury another corpse or do harm on the pretext of (having made a) purchase, there shall be upon him the curses written in Deuteronomy (Gager, *Curse*, 191). Cf. Meyer and Smith, *Christian Magic*, 211; Naveh, *Amulets*, 177.

<sup>56</sup> For a discussion of self-curses and oaths, cf. part 2.1.3. Cf. Deuteronomy 29:12.

<sup>57</sup> As Tigay (*Deuteronomy*, 255) notes: “Amen...As in the case of Nehemiah cited above, it expresses the people’s prayer that the punishment befall whoever commits the sin in question and acceptance of the punishment if they themselves commit it.”

<sup>58</sup> Brichto, *Problem*, 78-79.



commandments and the decrees that he commanded you (v. 45).

A strong association between curse, death, and destruction (ἐξολεθρεύω: “to destroy utterly”<sup>59</sup>) exists in Deuteronomy.<sup>60</sup> The curses of Deuteronomy 27:15-26 are punished by the death penalty elsewhere. As such, South rightly concludes: “It cannot be doubted, therefore, that the concept of pronounced curses associated with physical death was rooted in Paul’s religious background.”<sup>61</sup> In Deuteronomy 30:19, death and curse feature in a chiasmus: “I have set before you life [חַיָּה: LXX, ζωή] and death [מוֹת: LXX, θάνατος],<sup>62</sup> blessings [בְּרָכָה: LXX, εὐλογία] and curses [קְלָלָה: LXX, κατάρρα]. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live.”

In general, it is difficult to maintain a sharp distinction between curse and expulsion in a covenantal communal context, for exclusion is implicit within the Deuteronomic curses of chapters 27 and 28. As Forkman correctly states:

the curses form an integral part of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel, as אָלֹת. This is the case with the curses in Deut. 27 and 28...By answering “amen” the people accept the covenant and declare themselves ready to thrust out anyone who breaks the agreement. The fate of the one who is cursed is described in the next chapter. According to these curses all conceivable horrors will be heaped on to the one who breaks the covenant...the curse in itself includes no expulsion from the religious community. But when it acts as a surety for a covenant between Yahweh and Israel, it functions unavoidably like total and definite expulsion.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>59</sup> T. Muraoka, “ἐξολεθρεύω”, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint: Chiefly of the Pentateuch and the Twelve Prophets* (Peeters: Louvain, Paris, Dudley, 2002), 199. Note Paul’s use of the similar term ὀλεθρος in 1 Corinthians 5:5 (cf. part 3.4.4):

“The word [ἐξολεθρεύω] is often used in the LXX in statements which intimate God’s will to root out men for their sins or to cast off the chosen people for their disobedience. It occurs a few times in Test. XII: Test. S. 6:3; Jud. 6:5; 7:3; 21:1; Jos. 5:2...The NT has the word only once at Ac. 3:23. After the healing of the lame man in Solomon’s porch, Peter turns to the people. He proclaims Christ as the prophet promised by Moses, and quoting Lv. 23:29 and Dt. 18:19 declares that rejection of Jesus as the Messiah will be followed by destruction from among the redeemed people” (J. Schneider, “ἐξολεθρεύω”, 170-171 at 170-171).

<sup>60</sup> Elsewhere, curse and death are linked. For example, cf. Zechariah 5:3:

This is the curse [קְלָלָה: LXX, ἀρά] that goes out over the face of the whole land; for everyone who steals shall be cut off [מוֹת: LXX, θάνατος] according to the writing on one side, and everyone who swears falsely shall be cut off [מוֹת: LXX, θάνατος] according to the writing on the other side (Zechariah 5:3).

<sup>61</sup> South, *Disciplinary*, 43.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Deuteronomy 30:15.

<sup>63</sup> Forkman, *Limits*, 25. Cf. also Forkman (*Limits*, 24) in which he rightly notes a number of instances of אָלֹת in which exclusion does not feature. Similarly Horbury (W. Horbury, *Jews and*



As we have seen, in this Deuteronomic context, lying with (i.e. sexual relations with) one's γυναῖκα πατρός is punished with what Forkman phrases an “expulsion curse”.<sup>64</sup> Scharbert similarly comments that the אָרַר “formula is the most severe means of separating the community from the evildoer”.<sup>65</sup>

Beyond Deuteronomy 28:20, other instances in Tanakh relate cursing to sexual immorality. In the account of Noah's nakedness (Genesis 9:18-28), Ham—Noah's son—“saw the nakedness of his father” and informed his two brothers, Shem and Japheth, who cover him (Genesis 9:22-23). When Noah wakes, he utters a curse (אָרַר: LXX, ἐπικατάρατος) against Ham's son Canaan, and he blesses [בָּרַךְ: LXX, εὐλογία] Shem and Japheth (Genesis 9:25-27). As a result, accursed Canaan is subjugated to the position of a slave to his brothers. No agent is expressed to enact Noah's “curse”. However, given that Yahweh is the agent of blessing,<sup>66</sup> he is likely also to be the implied agent of the curse:

When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said, “Cursed be [אָרַר: LXX, ἐπικατάρατος] Canaan lowest of slaves shall he be to his

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*Christians in Contact and Controversy* [Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1998], 46-47) argues:

In the case of the covenant...the curses of the law bring exclusion into view as one of a group of penalties comprising curse, exclusion and death. The curses bring divinely-ordained exclusion from the land and destruction on the covenant-breakers (Lev. xxvi 14-39; Deut. xxvii 11-26, xxviii 15-68, xxix 10-30; dispersion, Lev. xxvi 33, Deut. xxvii 25; separation for evil, Deut. xxix 21). The death-penalty for idolatry, the most fundamental breach of covenant, can be inflicted not only by heaven (Num. xxv 9; Deut. iv 3), but also by men (Exod. xxii 19 [20]; Num. xxv 4-8; Deut. xiii 7-19 [6-18], xvii 2-7). Likewise, when the whole congregation enter afresh into a covenant, they guard it by the same measures of a curse (Neh. x 29) and the threat of excommunication (Ezra x 3, 8) or death (Asa's covenant, as narrated in II Chron. xv 12 f.).

<sup>64</sup> Forkman, *Limits*, 25. Concerning Greek curses, Strubbe (“Cursed”, 33-59 at 44) discusses the link between cursing, contagion, and exclusion: “As a result of the dangerous contagion, a cursed person had to be banished from society, usually to a place far away from human habitation.”

<sup>65</sup> J. Scharbert, “אָרַר”, in G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (eds), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (trans. J. T. Willies; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 405-418 at 409.

<sup>66</sup> Note the familiar link between blessing and cursing in Tanakh.

brothers.” He also said, “Blessed [בֵּרַךְ: LXX, εὐλογίᾳ] by the LORD my God be Shem; and let Canaan be his slave. May God make space for Japheth, and let him live in the tents of Shem; and let Canaan be his slave.”<sup>67</sup>

Debate surrounds exactly what Ham “did” to Noah. At face value, it would appear that Ham simply saw his father naked, and then informed his brothers of their father’s nakedness.<sup>68</sup> If so, why did Noah react with a devastating curse? Bassett rightly contends that the offence involves “more than just seeing”:<sup>69</sup>

Noah’s reaction to the offense is based on his awareness of “what his youngest son *had done* (‘āśāh) to him”...That the original offense was in part sexual gains additional support from the Old Testament usage of the expression “to see the nakedness of someone” (rā’āh ‘erwat).<sup>70</sup>

Bassett points to Leviticus 20:17, in which the “idiom” “sees her nakedness” refers to sexual intercourse,<sup>71</sup> Likewise, Ham “saw the nakedness of his father”.<sup>72</sup> As in Leviticus, so in Genesis, this phraseology appears idiomatic of sexual relations.<sup>73</sup> The nature of the sexual infraction was incest. However, it is not necessarily a case of homosexual incest (between Ham and his father), as Bassett remarks:

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<sup>67</sup> Genesis 9:25-27. For an interesting discussion of the offence which precipitated Noah’s ‘curse’, see F. W. Bassett, “Noah’s Nakedness and the Curse of Canaan: A Case of Incest?”, *Vetus Testamentum* 21 (1971), 232-237.

<sup>68</sup> Genesis 9:22.

<sup>69</sup> Bassett, “Nakedness”, 233.

<sup>70</sup> Bassett, “Nakedness”, 233.

<sup>71</sup> Likewise, W. Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 90. Other commentators appear uncomfortable at the suggestion of sexual impropriety in this instance. Skinner (J. Skinner, *Genesis* [The International Critical Commentary; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1910], 183) argues that “There is no reason to think...that Canaan was guilty of any worse sin than the *Schadenfreude* implied in the words. Heb. Morality called for the utmost delicacy in such matters, like that evinced by Shem and Japheth”.

Again, Westermann (C. Westermann, *Genesis: A Practical Commentary* [trans. D. E. Green; Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1987] 69.) unconvincingly argues that nakedness was “disgraceful”. As such, Canaan (or Ham) should have covered up his father. A Ugaritic epic is adduced in support of this reading: “In the Ugaritic Aqhat epic, helping a father returning drunk from a celebration is listed among the obligations of a son.” However, it adds little by way of support for his reading.

<sup>72</sup> Genesis 9:22.

<sup>73</sup> Bassett, “Nakedness”, 235.



The idiom is used to describe not homosexual but heterosexual intercourse, even when it speaks of a man seeing another man's nakedness. "To see a man's nakedness" means to have sexual relations with his wife.<sup>74</sup>

Leviticus 18:7 equates a father's "nakedness" with "the nakedness of your mother", and "the nakedness of your father's wife [אִשְׁתִּי אָבִי: LXX, γυνὴ πατρός]".<sup>75</sup> Bassett observes that the same convention applies to an Aunt<sup>76</sup> and a Sister-in-law.<sup>77</sup> The link between uncovering nakedness and sexual intercourse is made explicit in Leviticus 20:

The man who lies with his father's wife has uncovered his father's nakedness (v. 11)<sup>78</sup>  
If a man lies with his uncle's wife, he has uncovered his uncle's nakedness (v.20)  
If a man takes his brother's wife...he has uncovered his brother's nakedness (v.21)<sup>79</sup>

Bassett's argument is persuasive. The offence in the account of Noah's "nakedness" was sexual relations with a relative. As such, like Deuteronomy 27:20, we have evidence of another instance in which an account of sexual intercourse between family members is dealt with through a curse.

### 3.2.2 Γυνὴ Πατρός and כרת—Leviticus 18:8; 20:11

You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife [אִשְׁתִּי אָבִי: LXX, γυνὴ πατρός]; it is the nakedness of your father (Leviticus 18:8).

The man who lies with his father's wife [אִשְׁתִּי אָבִי: LXX, γυνὴ πατρός] has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall be put to death [מוֹת: LXX, θάνατος]; their blood is upon them (Leviticus 20:11).

Leviticus 18, which outlines specific laws concerning sexual relations, is pertinent to our discussion of γυνὴ πατρός: "None of you shall approach any one near of kin to him to uncover nakedness. I am the LORD" (Leviticus 18:6). The following Levitical

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<sup>74</sup> Bassett, "Nakedness", 235.

<sup>75</sup> Leviticus 18:8. We will discuss the reference γυνὴ πατρός in this verse in part 3.2.2.

<sup>76</sup> Leviticus 18:14.

<sup>77</sup> Leviticus 18:16.

<sup>78</sup> We will discuss this verse in part 3.2.2.

<sup>79</sup> Bassett, "Nakedness", 235.

verses (7-18) provide a specific outworking of this maxim, as related to the various familial possibilities.<sup>80</sup> Firstly, sexual relations (“uncovering the nakedness”) with one’s father or mother is forbidden (v.7).<sup>81</sup> Secondly, in verse 8, one is prohibited from sexual intercourse with בן תשן (LXX: γυνή πατρός). Although not a blood relation (which has been dealt with in the previous verse [v.7]), she is γυνή πατρός—the “father’s wife”—a stepmother. This argument gains even more support from the external evidence of rabbinic custom. In keeping with the Levitical tradition, rabbinical writings also refer to a stepmother as בן תשן.<sup>82</sup>

Paul’s mind is guided by the ethical prohibitions of Torah in 1 Corinthians 5, as his allusion to γυνή πατρός illustrates. Moreover, as we have seen in relation to Deuteronomy, Torah informs his thought more widely in 1 Corinthians 5. In Jewish paraenetic tradition, informed by Torah, πορνεία is commonly associated with a transgression by the Other—the nations (ἔθνη). Likewise, for Paul, this association is clear: the πορνεία that exists in the Corinthian church is “of a kind that is not found even among pagans [ἔθνη]” (5:1):

Paul makes a remark, introduced by an emphatic and expegetical *kai*, that bespeaks his sharing of the Jewish prejudice about the sexual mores of Gentiles (cf. Rom 1:14-27; compare Lev 18:3, 27). Gentiles serve as a negative reference group for Paul’s moral judgment in sexual matters (cf. 1 Thess 4:5).<sup>83</sup>

The Levitical legislation concerning sexual immorality forms part of a wider Levitical concern for purity. The practices of the Other—Egyptians and Canaanites—are not to be imitated, for they lead to “defilement” (Leviticus 18:24), and finally to the forfeiting

<sup>80</sup> Carmichael draws upon certain incest narratives contained in Genesis to explain innovatively the arrangement of the offences in Leviticus 18: C. M. Carmichael, *Law, Legend, and Incest in the Bible: Leviticus 18-20* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997).

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Iamblicus, *Vit. Pyth.*, 31.210; Aelius, *Nat. an.*, 3.47. Greek and Roman writers locate the practice of marrying or having sexual intercourse with one’s mother in Persia: Quint. Curt. Ruf., *Hist. Alex.*, 8.2.19; Philo, *Spec. leg.*, 3.13; Tat., *Or. Graec.*, 28.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Mishnah, *Sanhedrin*, 7:4.

<sup>83</sup> R. F. Collins, *Corinthians*, 209.



of the land they inhabit (Leviticus 18:3). The Other's loss of land is self-inflicted, resulting not only in divine, but earthly punishment:

Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, for by all these practices the nations [ἔθνη] I am casting out before you have defiled themselves. Thus the land became defiled; and I punished it for its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. But you shall keep my statutes and my ordinances and commit none of these abominations, either the citizen or the alien who resides among you (for the inhabitants of the land, who were before you, committed all of these abominations, and the land became defiled); otherwise the land will vomit you out for defiling it, as it vomited out the nation that was before you (Leviticus 18:24-25).

This general prohibition aimed at Israel (Leviticus 18:2) is now magnified by Paul to focus upon an individual within the Corinthian community (1 Corinthians 5:1) whose pollution, like leaven, threatens to infect the wider Corinthian church.<sup>84</sup> In Deuteronomy, we have seen that the punishment for committing sexual immorality with one's γυναῖκα πατρός was to suffer an expulsion curse and physical destruction. In Leviticus, the consequences of sexual immorality with one's γυναῖκα πατρός are similarly instructive for Paul's treatment of the errant πορνὸς in 1 Corinthians 5. As in Deuteronomy, "destruction" befalls the one guilty of this crime: "For whoever commits any of these abominations shall be cut off [כרת: LXX, ἐξολεθρεύω<sup>85</sup>] from their people" (Leviticus 18:29).<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Cf. part 3.2.2. Forkman (*Limits*, 19) notes of Leviticus 18:

Even a group of sexual laws are provided with the threat of extermination. Lev. 18 lists the forbidden liaisons. These things do not just defile those concerned, but also the whole land, and can cause Israel's people to be spewn out. That is why each one who does thus must be cut off from among his people. The ritual and the sexual laws are thus seen as a guard for God's holiness, and on a lower plane, Israel's holiness. The holiness of God and the temple must not be desecrated through ritual offences. Israel's holiness must not be desecrated through unclean associations.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Deuteronomy 28:20, 45 (LXX, ἐξολεθρεύω).

<sup>86</sup> B. A. Levine (*Leviticus: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary* [Philadelphia, New York, Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989], 241) helpfully explains כרת, thus: "On the most elemental level, "cutting" a person off is a metaphor borrowed from the felling of trees and other forms of vegetation."

Elsewhere, in Exodus 31:14, concerning Sabbath observance, כרת is also rendered ἐξολεθρεύω (in the Septuagint), and both terms are associated with the death of the נפש (LXX: ψυχή):<sup>87</sup>

You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you; everyone who profanes it shall be put to death [מות: LXX, θάνατος]; whoever does any work on it shall be cut off [כרת: LXX, ἐξολεθρεύω] from among the people (Exodus 31:14).

Similarly, Leviticus 20:11 specifically prescribes death (in this instance, מות [MT] and θάνατος [LXX] feature) for the one who has sexual relations with the γυνή πατρός:<sup>88</sup>

“The man who lies with his father’s wife [בן אשת: LXX, γυνή πατρός] has uncovered his father’s nakedness; both of them shall be put to death [מות: LXX, θάνατος]; their blood is upon them.”

We have seen that כרת—rendered “destruction” (LXX: ἐξολεθρεύω)—denotes death in the context of Leviticus 18.<sup>89</sup> In Deuteronomy, cursing is directly linked to the “destruction” that follows sexual immorality with one’s γυνή πατρός. Whilst the link is not as explicit in Leviticus, an association between כרת and cursing is nevertheless present:

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Forkman, *Limits*, 19. Consider again Deuteronomy 28:20, 45 (LXX, ἐξολεθρεύω), in which death is similarly envisaged. Concerning the Second Temple Period, Horbury (*Jews*, 47) notes that “the verb *krt* appears to have been associated above all with divinely-ordained death, sometimes inflicted by human beings.”

<sup>88</sup> Concerning the death penalty in Tanakh, cf. Leviticus 20; 21:9; 24:10-17, 21; 27:29; Genesis 9:5-6; 38:24; Exodus 19:12; 21:12-17, 29; 22:17; 31:12-15; 35:2; Numbers 1:51; 3:10, 38; 15:32-36; 18:7; 25:1-5; 35:16-34; Deuteronomy 13:1-12; 17:2-7, 12; 18:20; 19:11; 21:18-21; 22:13-27; 24:7, 16; Joshua 1:18; 7:15; Judges 20:13; 21:5; 2 Kings 14:6; 2 Chronicles 15:13; 25:4; Ezekiel 18:13.

Forkman (*Limits*, 17) notes five kinds of crime that result in the death penalty: various forms of idolatry (Leviticus 20:2-4, 20:27; Exodus 22:17; Deuteronomy 13:6-12); ritual infractions (Exodus 31:14, 35:2; Numbers 1:51; 3:10, 38; 18:7; 15:35); sexual offences (Leviticus 20:10-21); social violations (murder: Leviticus 24:17, 21; Exodus 21:12, 14; Numbers 35:16-18, 21, 30; Deuteronomy 19:11; dishonouring parents: Leviticus 20:9; Exodus 21:15, 17; kidnapping: Exodus 21:16; fatal negligence with one’s ox: Exodus 21:29; and mistreating widows and orphans: Exodus 22:21-23); and scorning Yahweh (Leviticus 24:16; Deuteronomy 17:12).

<sup>89</sup> Mishnah, *Sanhedrin*, 9:6; Mishnah, *Keritot*, 1:2.



At Lev. xviii 26-9 the regular Pentateuchal formula is linked with this thought of ejection from the land. Hence derives a less well-marked but visible association between *krt* and the curses of the law. The plagues which effect cutting-off from the land and Jerusalem in Ezek. xiv are the same, with a slight variation of order, as those which light upon the disobedient in the curse of Lev. xxvi 21-7. Dispossession is central in the curses (Lev. xxvi 33f.; Deut. xxviii 25). Although *krt* has no more than a subordinate part in the curse of Leviticus (xxvi 22), and does not occur in the Deuteronomic parallel (where *šmd*, sometimes synonymous with *krt*, as in Deut. xii 29, is repeatedly used in Deut. xxviii 20-63), its association with the curses of the law would have been encouraged by the specific link between *krt*, dispossession and the divine curse in Ps. Xxxvii 22 (the blessed inherit the land, but the accursed will be cut off).<sup>90</sup>

### 3.3 *Exclusion as a Wider Motif in 1 Corinthians 5*

The language of Paul's discussion in verse one resonates with the biblical motifs (and a wider cross-cultural understanding) of *curse*, *physical suffering*, and *exclusion*. The errant Corinthian's sin is grave, and the punishment Paul envisages is distilled in verse one, and expounded in the remainder of chapter 5. The judgment that the errant Corinthian should be excluded—the seeds of which are present in verse 1—is now repeated throughout chapter 5: in verse 2 Paul expresses his desire for the sexually immoral man's removal; in verses 6-8 Paul reiterates the need to expel the Corinthian πόρνος through the use of Passover imagery (cf. part 3.3.2); in verses 9-11, Paul calls upon the Corinthians to disassociate—that is, not to “mix”—with the incestuous man (cf. part 3.3.3); and finally, in verse 13, Paul commands them to “drive out the wicked person” (cf. part 3.3.4). We will consider each of these Pauline injunctions in support of our argument that expulsion is one of the key motifs in 1 Corinthians 5 (which features in tandem with cursing [cf. part 3.4]).

#### 3.3.1 The Physical Removal of the Offender—1 Corinthians 5:2

καὶ ὑμεῖς πεφυσιωμένοι ἐστὲ καὶ οὐχὶ μᾶλλον ἐπενθήσατε, ἵνα ἀρθῇ ἐκ μέσου ἡμῶν ὁ τὸ ἔργον τοῦτο πράξας (v. 2)

Instead of juxtaposing the blameworthy man with the blameless congregation, Paul

<sup>90</sup> Horbury, *Jews*, 61.

swiftly chides the Corinthians for their arrogance, literally for being “puffed up” (φυσιόω).<sup>91</sup> Paul has previously levied this charge against them; once again he makes his continued displeasure with them clear. What is less certain is the object of the Corinthians’ arrogance. The emphatic καὶ ὑμεῖς leaves little doubt that, as the immediate context suggests, this instance of Corinthian “arrogance” is related to the sexually immoral man.<sup>92</sup> Paul charges the Corinthians for their inappropriate “arrogant” attitude. They should have responded correctly to this instance of πορνεία by “mourning” (πενθέω)<sup>93</sup> at the sinfulness of the Corinthian offender in their midst.<sup>94</sup> As for the errant πόρνος, his fate is to be expelled from the Corinthian community (ἵνα ἄρθῃ ἐκ μέσου ὑμῶν ὁ τὸ ἔργον τοῦτο πράξας).

Like other parts of 1 Corinthians 5, the translation of the Greek text here is a matter of debate. Consider the *Revised Standard Version* (hereafter *RSV*) and the later *NRSV*’s rendering of ἵνα ἄρθῃ ἐκ μέσου ὑμῶν ὁ τὸ ἔργον τοῦτο πράξας:

And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be

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<sup>91</sup> See the discussion of φυσιόω as a thematic link between chapter four and five in part 3.2.

<sup>92</sup> It is not clear if the Corinthians are “puffed up” *in spite of* the man’s infraction, or *because of it*. Fee (*Corinthians*, 202) favours the latter position, arguing that the Corinthians are libertines who believe that “‘all things are lawful’...to the truly spiritual person”.

Whilst Fee’s reading is plausible, it is not preferable. The first option (that the Corinthians are arrogant *in spite of* the man’s infraction) has the advantage of offering a credible reading of the text without invoking as much conjecture as the second interpretation. For example, 6:12-13 (from which Fee reconstructs the Corinthians’ “theological stance”) need not be viewed as containing quotations that represent a Corinthian libertarian theology (cf. C. Spicq, *Théologie Morale du Nouveau Testament* [2 vols; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1965], 654): Paul’s words are perfectly explicable without such an interpretative move. Furthermore, in 5:4 (which we will consider in part 3.4.1) it is completely unnecessary to view “in the name of the lord Jesus” as relating to the attitude in which the man was carrying out his incestuous relationship.

<sup>93</sup> Rosner (*Paul*, 72) plausibly argues that Paul’s call to “mourn” is to be understood within a wider theological motif of mourning at sin, exemplified in Ezra’s (10:6) mourning over the “faithlessness of the exiles” due to their disobedient marriages with the Gentiles. Cf. 1 Esdras 8; Matthew 5:4; *T. Reub.* 1:10.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. 2 Corinthians 12:21 in which Paul speaks of the possibility of his “mourning” their sin: “I fear that when I come again, my God may humble me before you, and that I may have to mourn [πενθέω] over many who previously sinned and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality [πορνεία], and licentiousness that they have practised.”



removed from among you (*RSV*: verse 2).

And you are arrogant! Should you not rather have mourned, so that he who has done this would have been removed from among you? (*NRSV*: verse 2).<sup>95</sup>

In the *RSV*, the Corinthians are *instructed by Paul* to remove the Corinthian offender: as Fee notes, this translation “understands the ἵνα to be imperativial”.<sup>96</sup> Alternatively, the *NRSV*’s translation unites the Corinthian act of “mourning” with the “removal” of the Corinthian offender. Grammatically, Fee remarks that rather than interpreting ἵνα imperatively, the *NRSV*’s approach renders ἵνα “as a consecutive, similar to ὥστε.”<sup>97</sup> Fee and South both offer plausible explanations as to how the Corinthians’ “mourning” could have resulted in the offender’s removal. For example, Fee focuses upon Tanakh to explain the connection between “mourning” and the exclusion of the offender:

The removal of sinful objects is always a concomitant of national repentance in Israel. See, e.g., 2 Kgs. 23:4-5 in the context of 22:11, 19; Zech. 13:2 in the context of 12:10-14; Ezra 10:3 in the context of 10:1.<sup>98</sup>

However, this is inconclusive. Regardless of how one renders this passage, Paul’s desire to see the immoral man “removed from among” the Corinthians (ἀρθῆ ἔκ μέσου ὑμῶν) is not in question.

### 3.3.2 Passover Imagery—1 Corinthians 5:6-8

Your boasting [καύχημα] is not a good thing. Do you not know that a little yeast [ζύμη] leavens [ζυμοῖ] the whole batch of dough? Clean out the old yeast [παλαιὰν ζύμην] so that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us celebrate the festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice [ζύμη κακίας] and evil [πονηρίας], but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (verses 6-8).

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<sup>95</sup> The *New International Version* renders verse 2 in a similar manner. Furthermore, this rendering has also been adopted by a number of scholars (cf. Barrett, *Corinthians*, 122; Conzelmann, *Corinthians*, 96).

<sup>96</sup> Fee, *Corinthians*, 202 n. 29.

<sup>97</sup> Fee, *Corinthians*, 202 n. 29.

<sup>98</sup> Fee, *Corinthians*, 203 n. 32. Cf. Rosner, *Paul*, 72-73. South (*Disciplinary*, 32) argues for a similar sense of ἵνα in Romans 3:19, 5:20-21, 7:13; and Galatians 5:17.

The Corinthians are “puffed up” (verse 2) and boastful (verse 6). Paul has previously chided them for their “boasting” (καύχημα).<sup>99</sup> While they display this attitude, they are ignorant of the fact that “a little yeast [or better “leaven”: ζύμη] leavens [ζυμοί] the whole batch of dough” (verse 6).<sup>100</sup> Paul’s metaphorical language here is not merely domestic, but more significantly is imbued with Passover imagery in which unleavened bread features.<sup>101</sup> “Leaven” (ζύμη), that is old fermented dough,<sup>102</sup> is a common biblical metaphor for evil.<sup>103</sup> Contrary to Robertson and Plummer, who argue that the ζύμη in the Corinthian community is “a vitiated public opinion”,<sup>104</sup> in this instance the Corinthian πόρνος is the “leaven” who is infecting—leavening—the wider Corinthian community.<sup>105</sup> Paul’s thought is structured in a similar manner in verse 2. Firstly, he judges the Corinthians’ mistaken attitude, and then he focuses specifically upon the sexually immoral Corinthian individual:

**Corinthian Church:**

And you are arrogant! Should you not rather have mourned? (verse 2)  
Your boasting is not a good thing. Do *you* not know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? (verse 6. Emphasis added).

**Sexually immoral Corinthian:**

so that he who has done this would have been removed from among you? (verse 2)  
Let him who has done this be removed from among you (*RSV*: verse 2)  
Clean out [ἐκκαθάρατε] the old yeast so that you may be a new batch (verse 7).

As previously, Paul restates his command to exclude the errant Corinthian: “Clean out the old yeast [ἐκκαθάρατε τὴν παλαιὰν ζύμην] so that you may be a new batch”

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<sup>99</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 4:7.

<sup>100</sup> Paul’s phrasing here, in verse six, is in the form of a rhetorical question, which anticipates a positive answer.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Exodus 12:8, 15-20; 13:7; Isaiah 53:7; 1 Peter 1:19.

<sup>102</sup> J. K. Howard, “‘Christ our Passover’: A Study of the Passover-Exodus Theme in 1 Corinthians”, *Evangelical Quarterly* 41 (1969), 97-108 at 100.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Matthew 13:33; 16:6, 11-12; Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1; Galatians 5:9.

<sup>104</sup> Robertson and Plummer, *First Epistle*, 101.

<sup>105</sup> Fee, *Corinthians*, 215. Likewise, Hays, *First Corinthians*, 83.



(verse 7): that is “They are to get rid of the ‘old leaven,’ the incestuous man, so that they might become what they really are, a ‘new batch of dough [νέον φύραμα]”<sup>106</sup>—for they ‘really are unleavened [ἄζυμοι].” The Corinthian community is pure—ἄζυμοι (without “leaven”)—whilst the πόρνος they are harbouring is impure. They must treat the miscreant Corinthian in the same manner as “leaven” in the approach to Passover:

a Jewish household, in preparation for the Passover, purges the house of all leaven (Exod. xii. 15f., xiii. 7). This was understood as a symbol of moral purification, and the search for leaven as symbolizing infectious evil was scrupulously minute, e.g. with candles to look into corners and mouse-holes for crumbs of leavened bread. Zeph. i. 12 was supposed to imply this.<sup>107</sup>

Paul’s thought proceeds from the Passover tradition, to a Christological reflection upon the meaning of this festival. The Corinthians are unleavened—sanctified—because “Christ”, the “paschal lamb”, “has been sacrificed” (verse 7):

Because they are being liberated from captivity through the death of Jesus, they should act like Israel on the night of Passover: clean out the leaven and gather together for the feast that celebrates their deliverance.<sup>108</sup>

Paul re-issues his desire for the removal of the impure Corinthian—who is ζύμη πονηρίας:<sup>109</sup> “let us celebrate the festival, not with the old yeast [μὴ ἐν ζύμῃ παλαιᾷ], the yeast [ζύμη] of malice and evil [πορνεία], but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (verse 8).” As in verse 2, in which Paul’s desire is to see the errant Corinthian removed; so here, he twice calls for the expulsion of the πόρνος:

<sup>106</sup> Fee, *Corinthians*, 215.

<sup>107</sup> Robertson and Plummer, *First Epistle*, 101.

<sup>108</sup> Hays, *First Corinthians*, 86.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Exodus 12:15 in which one who eats leavened bread during Passover is to have his נפש “cut off [כרת] from Israel.” For a discussion of כרת, cf. 3.2.2.

“Clean out the old yeast” (verse 7) and “let us celebrate the festival, not with the old yeast...of evil [πορνεία]” (verse 8).

### 3.3.3 Disassociation—1 Corinthians 5:9-11

I wrote to you in my letter not to associate [συναναμίγνυμαι] with sexually immoral persons [πόρνοι]—not at all meaning the immoral of this world [τοῖς πόρνοις τοῦ κόσμου], or the greedy and robbers, or idolaters, since you would then need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother or sister [ἀδελφὸς ὀνομαζόμενος] who is sexually immoral [ἢ πόρνος] or greedy, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber. Do not even eat with such a one (verses 9-11).

Paul has instructed the Corinthians in a previous letter not to “mix” (συναναμίγνυμαι [‘mix together’]<sup>110</sup>) with πόρνοι. Within the context of 1 Corinthians 5, the errant Corinthian is clearly the foremost example of πορνεία in Paul’s mind. As such, Paul continues his tireless call for exclusion (verse 9).

In his previous letter, Paul was misunderstood by the Corinthians who thought his call not to “mix” with πόρνοι (neither “the greedy and robbers, or idolaters” [verse 10]<sup>111</sup>), was referring to those outside of the church (τοῖς πόρνοις τοῦ κόσμου). However, Paul did not mean τοῖς πόρνοις τοῦ κόσμου, for such a suggestion would have meant that the Corinthians would have had to “go out of the world”. Paul offers no further elaboration; instead, he considers this statement axiomatic.<sup>112</sup>

In verse 11, Paul reiterates his call upon the Corinthians not to “mix” (συναναμίγνυμαι) with anybody who refers to himself as an ἀδελφός, yet is a πόρνος. As in verse 9, by implication, the Corinthians must not keep company with the

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<sup>110</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:14.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. other vice lists in the New Testament: 1 Corinthians 6:10-11; 2 Corinthians 12:20-21; Romans 1:29-31; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:3-5; Colossians 3:5, 8; 1 Timothy 1:9-11; 2 Timothy 3:2-5; Titus 3:3. It is interesting that Paul expands the discussion beyond πορνεία. Previously, he mentioned “malice” (κακία) in conjunction with πορνεία (v. 8). To claim that Paul maintained a moral equivalence between “sexual immorality”, “greed”, “robbery”, and “idolatry” is to speculate beyond the available evidence.

<sup>112</sup> In the light of ancient ascetic groups, such as the Essenes, it is surprising that Paul fails to expound this point. Cf. Barrett, *Corinthians*, 131.



sexually immoral offender in their midst. Whilst Paul mentions those committing πορνεία as the first type of alleged brother who must not be associated with,<sup>113</sup> he again includes greedy, idolaters, revilers, drunkards, and robbers as other immoral person whom the Corinthians must not “mix” with (verse 11). As previously, Paul’s thought resonates with Deuteronomy, as Rosner ably demonstrates:<sup>114</sup>

The LXX of Deuteronomy lists five such offences which in each case may be roughly compared with five of the six items in Paul’s list: sexual promiscuity in Deuteronomy 22:21 (ἐκπορνεύω, LXX) is equivalent to πόρνος (fornicator); idolatry in 17:3,7 lines up with εἰδωλολάτρης [*sic*] (idolater); malicious false testimony (19:18-19) with λοῖδορος (reviler); the rebellious son who is a profligate and a drunkard (21:20-21) with μέθυσοις (drunkard); and theft (24:7) with ἄρπαξ (thief). The only item in Paul’s list without such a conceptual precedent is πλεονέκτης, which, as Leon Morris observes, is linked with ἄρπαξιν as one class in 5:10. The five correspondences are difficult to pass off as coincidental.<sup>115</sup>

Having clarified the identity of those whom Paul does not want the Corinthians to “mix” with, he stresses that he does not wish for the Corinthians to “even eat with such a one” (verse 11). Given the context of the Lord’s Supper as a part of a wider meal,<sup>116</sup> this would have excluded the sexually immoral Corinthian’s participation. Fee maintains that:

Paul’s concern throughout does not seem to be that the church as individual members dissociate from the incestuous man, but that he be excluded from the *community* as it gathers for worship and instruction.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Cf. Ephesians 5:3-8; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; Titus 3:10-11.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. part 3.2.1. *Contra*. Rosner, cf. C. Tuckett, “Paul, Scripture and Ethics” in J. M. Court (ed.), *New Testament Writers and the Old Testament: An Introduction* (London: SPCK, 2002), 71-97. Tuckett (“Paul”, 81) rightly notes that the Corinthians may not have detected the (for Tuckett, alleged) Deuteronomic resonances within 1 Corinthians 5. After all, regardless of their knowledge of Tanakh, they have already demonstrated their ability to misunderstand his thought.

The role of Deuteronomy in Paul’s thinking is unaffected by this conclusion. In this study, we are not seeking to comment upon the Corinthian’s comprehension of Pauline thought.

<sup>115</sup> Rosner, *Paul*, 69. Hays (*First Corinthians*, 87-88), following Rosner, argues similarly.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 11:21.

<sup>117</sup> Fee, *Corinthians*, 226.

Fee is correct in his assessment of the corporate nature of this act.<sup>118</sup> However, there is no reason to restrict συναναμίγνυμαι solely to the context of worship.<sup>119</sup> Instead, as in verses six to eight, Paul calls not only for the man's exclusion, but for the Corinthians to cease associating themselves with him in their individual lives.<sup>120</sup>

### 3.3.4 “Drive out the Wicked Person”—1 Corinthians 5:12-13

For what have I to do with judging those outside? Is it not those who are inside that you are to judge? God will judge those outside. “Drive out the wicked person from among you” [ἐξάρατε τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν] (verses 12-13).

Having clarified the confusion caused by his previous letter (in verses 9-11), Paul states that it is not his place to judge “outsiders” (verse 12); God judges such ones (verse 13).<sup>121</sup> Rather, the Corinthians are responsible for judging insiders (verse 12). Thus far, they have failed to judge. So, Paul admonishes them again: “Drive out the wicked person from among you” (ἐξάρατε τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν [verse 13]). His command, as on previous occasions, resonates strongly with Deuteronomy. However, contrary to Fee,<sup>122</sup> it is not clear that verse 13 is a “quotation from Deut. 17:7” (as is demonstrated below). Consider the following Deuteronomistic resonances with verse 13:

ἐξάρατε τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν (1 Corinthians 5:13)  
 ἐξαρεῖς τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν (Deuteronomy 17:7: LXX)  
 ἐξαρεῖς τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ Ἰσραήλ (Deuteronomy 17:12: LXX)  
 ἐξαρεῖς τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν (Deuteronomy 19:19: LXX)  
 ἐξαρεῖς τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν (Deuteronomy 21:21: LXX)  
 ἐξαρεῖς τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν (Deuteronomy 22:21: LXX)  
 ἐξαρεῖς τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν ἐξ Ἰσραήλ (Deuteronomy 22:22: LXX)  
 ἐξαρεῖς τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν (Deuteronomy 22:24: LXX)  
 ἐξαρεῖς τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν (Deuteronomy 24:7 [24:9: LXX]).

ἀφανιεῖς τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν (Deuteronomy 13:5 [13:6 LXX]).

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<sup>118</sup> Cf. part 3.4.1.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Barrett (*Corinthians*, 132), who rightly understands Paul's words to include “private entertainment.”

<sup>120</sup> Interestingly, supposing Paul's reasoning has not faltered, Paul does not consider the errant Corinthian τοῦ κόσμου for that would allow the Corinthians unrestricted association with the πόρνος.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 3:13; 6:2.

<sup>122</sup> Fee, *Corinthians*, 227.



In Deuteronomy 17:7, this recurrent Deuteronomic phraseology concerns the application of the death penalty in response to an act of idolatry. The sanction follows a judicial inquiry (verse 4), where the formal punishment for this crime is stoning (verse 6). The witnesses of this offence (the evidence of one witness is insufficient to convict) are the first to initiate the fatal stoning. Through the death of this man, “you shall purge the evil from your midst” (verse 7). Again, in verse 12, one who disobeys the ruling of a priest, who has been called upon to pass judgment in a more difficult case of law (verse 8), is to die (verse 12): the death purges [ἐξαιρέω] “the evil from Israel.”

Like Fee, McDonough argues (in more pointed terms) that 1 Corinthians 5:13 is a “transparent citation” of Deuteronomy 17:7. Building upon this, he argues that Paul “structured his entire discussion of this section of 1 Corinthians in the light of the text of Deuteronomy 17.”<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, McDonough maintains that the theme of “judging difficult cases within Israel” is crucial to Paul’s discussion in 1 Corinthians 5-6.<sup>124</sup>

Words related to *κρίνω* occur in Deut. 17:8, 9, 11, 12, are picked up in 1 Cor. 5:2, 12-13, and then proliferate with the beginning of chapter 6. It seems beyond coincidence that Paul should first discuss the expulsion of a notorious sinner from the community in 1 Corinthians 5, in accord with Deut. 17:2-7; explicitly cite Deut. 17:7 in 5:13; and then immediately move onto the question of difficult cases of judgement, just as the writer of Deuteronomy had done in 17:8ff. The fact that the writer of Deuteronomy concludes his discussion by repeating ‘you will drive out the evil’ makes Paul’s use of this material all the more likely.<sup>125</sup>

McDonough’s thesis is provoking, yet overstated. Firstly, his argument is fatally undermined by the other occurrences of this Deuteronomic formula (which he fails to

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<sup>123</sup> S. M. McDonough, “Competent to Judge: The Old Testament Connection Between 1 Corinthians 5 and 6”, *Journal of Theological Studies* 56:1 (2005), 99-102 at 101 (McDonough’s emphasis).

<sup>124</sup> McDonough, “Competent”, 100.

<sup>125</sup> McDonough, “Competent”, 100.

note).<sup>126</sup> Whilst, secondly, his thesis requires one to imagine that judgment of the errant Corinthian constituted a “difficult case” for Paul—an assertion that remains unproven by McDonough.<sup>127</sup>

Deuteronomy 19:19 refers to the treatment of a false witness whose evil intent falls back upon himself. The punishment he receives is directly proportionate to that which he inflicted upon his victim: “Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot” (verse 21).<sup>128</sup> Deuteronomy 21:21 concerns a rebellious son who is also accused of being “a glutton and a drunkard” (verse 20);<sup>129</sup> although disciplined, his behaviour is unchanged (verse 18). The law instructs his father and mother to bring him before the “elders of the town” (verse 19), who sentence him to death by stoning at the hands of “all the men of the town” (verse 21). As before, through the man’s death, “the evil one” is purged from their midst (verse 21).

Deuteronomy 24:7 pertains to kidnap. If somebody is guilty of this crime, they must die—“you shall purge the evil from your midst” (verse 7).<sup>130</sup> In Deuteronomy 13:5 [LXX, 13:6], ἀφαιρέω (“to remove”) features instead of the familiar verb: ἐξαιρέω. Despite this difference, the formula remains constant. Like Deuteronomy 17, Deuteronomy 13:5 relates to idolatry.<sup>131</sup> In particular, if “prophets” or diviners of dreams incite people to “follow other gods” (verse 2), the people are instructed that this

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<sup>126</sup> Consider again the other Deuteronomic resonances with 1 Corinthians 5:13 (above).

<sup>127</sup> Recall again, McDonough’s argument that the theme of “judging difficult cases within Israel” is pertinent (McDonough, “Competent”, 100).

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Exodus 21:23-25.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. Deuteronomy 5:16; 27:16; Exodus 21:15, 17; Leviticus 20:9.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. Exodus 21:16.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. Deuteronomy 17:17.



is Yahweh's testing (verse 3).<sup>132</sup> Rather than follow such prophets and diviners, they must stone them "to death for having spoken treason against the LORD your God" (verse 5). In so doing, they will cause the evil to vanish from their midst (verse 5).

The most pertinent Deuteronomic resonance with 1 Corinthians 5:13 is in chapter 22, as it concerns sexual immorality. In this instance, upon marriage, the man alleges that his wife is not a virgin. If she is found guilty of this charge:

[she is to be brought] out to the entrance of her father's house and the men of her town shall stone her to death, because she committed a disgraceful act in Israel by prostituting herself in her father's house. So you shall purge the evil from your midst [ἐξαρεῖς τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν] (verse 21).

Similarly, verse 22 decrees death for both parties if a "man is caught lying with the wife of another man". The edict ends: "So you shall purge the evil from Israel" (ἐξαρεῖς τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν ἐξ Ἰσραήλ). If a virgin woman is engaged and another man has sexual intercourse with her, they will both be stoned to death (verses 23-24). As previously, the death penalty is the means by which the Israelites "purge the evil from...[their] midst" (ἐξαρεῖς τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν).

With the exception of Deuteronomy 19:19, each of these cases involves the application of the death penalty, while the act of removing the evil man—through death—is communal.<sup>133</sup> Paul's use of this Deuteronomic formula could not be more apt, for he contemporises this ancient phraseology to the Corinthian's situation:

Paul's citation...[ἐξάρατε τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν] follows the Septuagint rather than the Hebrew text; he changes the verb from a future indicative to an aorist imperative,

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<sup>132</sup> Interestingly, the accuracy of the forecasts of these prophets and diviners remains a possibility. Cf. Deuteronomy 13:2.

<sup>133</sup> We will argue that 1 Corinthians 5 also envisages a communal action.

thus making it clear that he is reading Deuteronomy as a word of command addressed to his Corinthian readers. Paul seems to have translated and transferred the basic disciplinary norms of Israel's covenant community over on to the church at Corinth. The word of command, "Drive out the evil person from among you," is presented as a word spoken directly to the Corinthians. There is no appeal here to analogy ("Just as God told Israel to drive out the evil person, so you should do the same"); rather, Paul in effect addresses the Gentile Corinthians *as* Israel. God's word to Israel has become God's word directly to them.<sup>134</sup>

For Paul, the expulsion of the incestuous Corinthian is a divine imperative: "Drive out the evil person from among you" (verse 13). From the initial linguistic resonance in Paul's thought between this contemporary act of πορνεία, the כרת exclusion curses of Deuteronomy, and the grave Levitical punishment of כרת, exclusion has featured in Paul's thinking. From verse 2 onwards, he has repeatedly called for the expulsion of the Corinthian of the errant πόρνος as a communal act:

ἀρθῇ ἐκ μέσου ὑμῶν (5:2)  
 ἐκκαθάρατε τὴν παλαιὰν ζύμην (5:7)  
 ἐορτάζωμεν μὴ ἐν ζύμῃ παλαιᾷ μηδὲ ἐν ζύμῃ κακίας καὶ πονηρίας (5:8)  
 μὴ συναναμίγνυσθαι πόρνοις (5:10)  
 μὴ συναναμίγνυσθαι ἐάν τις ἀδελφὸς ὀνομαζόμενος ἢ πόρνος (5:11)  
 μηδὲ συνεσθίειν (5:11)  
 ἐξάρατε τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν (5:13).

However, in tandem with this motif is the accursed fate of the incestuous man. As we have seen, ἐξάρατε τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν modifies the formulaic Deuteronomic command which entailed death, or a lesser suffering which mirrored the crime (Deuteronomy 19:19). In the coming section, we will argue that a similar fate is envisaged by Paul, as a consequence of the curse that he calls upon the Corinthians to bring against this man in 1 Corinthians 5:3-5.

### 3.4 *Cursing in the Wider context of 1 Corinthians 5*

In part 1.2, we noted that advocates of a non-curse interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5 understand verse 5 in terms of exclusion alone. Παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ

<sup>134</sup> Hays, *First Corinthians*, 87-88.



Σατανᾶ, they argue, means that the Corinthians are to “hand over” the man to the sphere in which Satan reigns—the domain outside the church. As such, Paul calls upon the Corinthians to exclude the sexually immoral man.

Contrary to this reading, it is our contention that Paul’s command παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾶ is not a metaphorical call for exclusion, but instead constitutes an implicit curse (which is made explicit by Paul’s words εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός, in verse 5)—the seeds of which are present in Paul’s thought from verse 1, in which Deuteronomy and Leviticus inform Paul’s thought concerning the appropriate punishment for πορνεία involving one’s stepmother (γυνὴ πατρός): namely, curse, exclusion, and destruction.

Before we focus in particular upon verse 5, we will consider the various grammatical constructions of 1 Corinthians 5:3-5 (in part 3.4.1). Subsequently, in part 3.4.2, we will examine some linguistic resonances with Paul’s words παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾶ. In the New Testament, 1 Timothy 1:20 (specifically, the phrase: παρέδωκα τῷ Σατανᾶ) has long been highlighted by scholars as a clear resonance with verse 5. We will consider scholarly interpretation of this verse, and assess its implications for verse 5 (in part 3.4.2.1). Likewise, the account of Job’s “handing over” to the Satan resonates strongly with verse 5 (which we will consider in part 3.4.2.2).

Paul employs the term ἀνάθεμα (which also renders 𐤀𐤒𐤍 in the LXX) several times in his epistles: at Galatians 1:8-9; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 16:22; and Romans 9:3. The contextual use of this term is particularly pertinent to our study, for it can be rendered “devote to destruction”, or more generically as “curse”. Whilst primarily focussing

upon Galatians 1:8-9, due to the suggestion that it functions in a similar manner to verse 5, we will also consider 1 Corinthians 12:3; 16:22; and Romans 9:3 (in part 3.4.2.3).

Finally, in part 3.4.2.4, we will consider παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ in the light of our study of Jewish and Graeco-Roman cursing in part two (where we noted the widespread use of “hand over” language within the context of [binding] curses).

### 3.4.1 Grammatical Constructions—1 Corinthians 5:3-5

1 Corinthians 5:3-5 can be construed in a variety of ways. Firstly, Paul can be understood to have “pronounced judgment in the name of the Lord” by interpreting ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου with κέκρικα (thus, following the word order).<sup>135</sup> Another possibility involves construing ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου with συναχθέντων ὑμῶν, which would mean that the Corinthians assemble in the Lord’s name. Again, ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου and παραδοῦναι can be placed together, so that the “hand over to Satan” takes place in the “name of the Lord”.

Furthermore, σὺν τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ can be construed with συναχθέντων ὑμῶν, in which instance the Corinthians assemble with the power of the Lord Jesus. Alternatively, παραδοῦναι can be read with σὺν τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ. Thus, “with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man”.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Cf. *RSV*, *NRSV*.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. *RSV*, *NRSV*.



Regardless of how one construes verses 3 to 5,<sup>137</sup> little confusion surrounds the construction of verse 5 itself (which is the primary focus of our attention). Furthermore, the main elements of verses 3 and 4 remain clear. Whilst Paul was absent from the Corinthians at the time of writing, he is undeterred in passing judgment (κρίνω) upon the errant Corinthian: for though “absent [ἄπειμι] in body [σῶμα]”,<sup>138</sup> he is “present [πάρειμι] in spirit [πνεῦμα]”.

Whilst Paul’s physical (σῶμα) absence is not in question,<sup>139</sup> the nature of his pneumatic [πνεῦμα] presence is a matter of discussion. Whereas πάρειμι (‘presence’) functions in an oppositional binary with ἄπειμι (‘absence’), scholars are divided as to whether or not σῶμα (‘body’) and πνεῦμα (‘spirit’) function similarly (i.e. physical presence [σῶμα] and physical absence [πνεῦμα]). Some have suggested that Paul’s words are akin to the contemporary sentiment of solidarity: “you are in my thoughts”. However, as O’Brien rightly argues: “Paul states that he is present with them, not that they are with him.”<sup>140</sup> Some scholars understand this as an *operatio distans*:

The suggestion then is that Jesus saw the disciples in distress on the lake (Mark 6.48) and his concern and thought for them was projected in a vision of him which (at length) brought them the comfort of his presence. A striking parallel from within the NT itself is I Cor. 5.3-5, where Paul believes he can be with the Corinthians church ‘in spirit’ - that is, not just in his thoughts and prayers: ‘In all reality and without hesitation he believed that he was capable of operating spiritually at a distance’. Another possible parallel is Matt. 18.20 – ‘Where two or three have met together in my name, I am there among them’ – although this should more probably be recognized as a word of the exalted Jesus spoken through prophecy.<sup>141</sup>

<sup>137</sup> For a more detailed discussion, cf. Conzelmann, *Corinthians*, 96-97; Forkman, *Limits*, 141-143.

<sup>138</sup> Concerning Paul’s absence, cf. 2 Corinthians 13:2.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 4:19.

<sup>140</sup> P. T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon* (Word Biblical Commentary 44; Waco: Word Books, 1982), 98.

<sup>141</sup> J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975; London: SCM, 1997), 73. Cf. J. Ashton, *The Religion of Paul the Apostle* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 210-211.

Otto links this phenomenon with a “charismatic milieu” (R. Otto, *The Kingdom of God and the*

Support for this reading is found in verse 4 in which, in concert with the Corinthians' presence (συναχθέντων ὑμῶν), Paul again speaks of the attendance of his πνεῦμα (this time outwith a binary construction). Hays' reasoning is most persuasive, for he does not seek to rationalise Paul's words in line with modern temperament; instead, he allows the opaque nature of this passage to show:

If he could be "caught up to the third heaven" (2 Cor. 12:2), it would not be difficult to imagine that he could think of himself as being transported "in spirit" from Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:8) to Corinth to take part in some mysterious but real way in the church's crucial disciplinary action.<sup>142</sup>

Paul is with them τῷ πνεύματι, and as if (ὥς) present he has passed judgment (verse 3) upon the one "working" (κατεργάζομαι) this sexual immorality (verse 4). The Corinthians are to assemble, along with Paul's spirit (verse 4), whilst the "name" and "power" of the Lord Jesus feature (verse 4).<sup>143</sup> It is in the context of this gathering that the errant Corinthian is to be "handed over to Satan"—a concept that resonates with a wide variety of Jewish and Graeco-Roman literature in the ancient world, as we will now explicitly demonstrate in the following discussion (in part 3.4.2).

### 3.4.2 Biblical and Extra-Biblical Resonances: A Curse Interpretation of παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ

#### 3.4.2.1 1 Timothy 1:20—παρέδωκα τῷ Σατανᾷ

By rejecting conscience, certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith, among them

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*Son of Man: A Study in the History of Religion* [trans. F. V. Filson and B. L. Woolf; London: Lutterworth Press, 1938], 372. Cf. Otto, *Kingdom*, 349-350), whilst Yarbrow Collins (A. Yarbrow Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism* [Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996], 12) seeks to locate ἑκστασις in a more cross-cultural context by noting Eliade's study of shamanistic visionary experiences (M. Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* [Bollingen Series 76; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964], 181-214).

<sup>142</sup> Hays, *First Corinthians*, 84.

<sup>143</sup> Considerable study has taken place of the use of Jesus' ὄνομα. Some consider this phrase of magical provenance, whilst others suggest the language of commerce, or a Semitic origin. Cf. D. Levene, "...and by the Name of Jesus": An Unpublished Magic Bowl in Jewish Aramaic", *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 6:4 (1999), 283-308.



Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered to Satan [παρέδωκα τῷ Σατανᾷ] that they may learn not to blaspheme (1 Timothy 1:19b-20).

The resonance between 1 Timothy 1:20 (παρέδωκα τῷ Σατανᾷ) and 1 Corinthians 5:5 (παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ) is compelling. The pseudonymous writer of 1 Timothy, who effectively imitates Paul's literary style, singles out two individuals—Hymenaeus<sup>144</sup> and Alexander<sup>145</sup>—who have “rejected conscience” and have “shipwrecked” their faith. Specifically, they are accused of blasphemy,<sup>146</sup> for which the writer states: “I have delivered [them] to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme” (verse 20).

Advocates of an exclusion-only reading of 1 Corinthians 5:5 frequently highlight 1 Timothy 1:20 in support of their position, which they suggest means that Hymenaeus and Alexander are to be excluded (i.e. “handed over to Satan”) through which they will “learn” the error of their ways and potentially repent. Knight offers the following interpretation:

Delivery over to Satan is an act of discipline for unrepentant sin and involves putting the person out of the church, the fellowship of God's people, into the realm controlled by Satan (1 Cor. 5:2, 7, 11, 13). The apostolic determination to deliver such a person to Satan was accomplished by the church's act of discipline (cf. 1 Cor. 5:3-5), as was likely the case here also.<sup>147</sup>

The logic here is simple, yet flawed: 1 Corinthians 5:5 refers to exclusion, therefore 1 Timothy 1:20 must similarly refer to exclusion.<sup>148</sup> However, if we apply this logic to

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<sup>144</sup> Cf. 2 Timothy 2:17.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. 2 Timothy 4:14; Acts 19:33.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 5:5 in which the errant Corinthian remains nameless.

<sup>147</sup> G. W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Paternoster Press/William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 111.

<sup>148</sup> Consider Wright who argues that “As in 1 Corinthians 5, this seems to mean that such people are to be put out of the Christian assembly” (N. T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: The Pastoral Letters: 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus*, London: SPCK, 2003, 16). Similarly, cf. G. D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*:

our curse interpretation of verse 5, then 1 Timothy 1:20 may constitute an implicit curse.<sup>149</sup> Despite the linguistic resonance, we must also consider the possibility that the author of 1 Timothy understood the words παρέδωκα τῷ Σατανᾷ in a different manner to Paul: stylistic resonance does not guarantee conceptual congruity.<sup>150</sup>

The interpretation of “learn” (παιδεύω) is pivotal to an understanding of this passage. Contrary to R. F. Collins, who would argue that this suggests a remedial process which follows exclusion,<sup>151</sup> it is also possible that “learn” is used euphemistically. Marshall rejects this suggestion:

The possibility that the word may be heavily ironical and refer simply to severe punishment (as in our English ‘That will teach him’ or ‘That will learn him!’) is unlikely in view of the redemptive goal linked to παιδεύοντα in 2 Tim 2.25.<sup>152</sup>

However, 2 Timothy 2:25 (in which the characteristics of a minister as one who “corrects” [παιδεύω] “opponents with gentleness”) has little bearing on the interpretation of 1 Timothy 1:20 in which Hymenaeus and Alexander are corrected by

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New International Biblical Commentary (ed. W. W. Gasque; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1992), 59.

<sup>149</sup> The presence of an explicit curse is dependent upon one’s interpretation of παιδεύω. Cf. Forkman (*Limits*, 183) who argues that, like 1 Corinthians 5:5, 1 Timothy 1:20 constitutes a curse:

In both passages the curse is said to serve a good purpose; but while the possibility of salvation is, in 1 Cor. 5, to take place in “the day of the Lord”, the writer of 1 Tim. seems to hope that the one who is cursed will soon better himself.

In support of this reading, we will argue that παιδεύω can entail physical suffering and possibly even death. In particular, the use of παιδεύω in 1 Corinthians 11:32 adds considerable weight to this argument (cf. part 3.4.4.2).

D. Krause (*1 Timothy* [London, New York: T & T Clark, 2004], 45) interestingly notes that “the letter writer is actively involved in determining who is saved and who is damned.”

<sup>150</sup> Fee (*Corinthians*, 208 n. 62) is overconfident in his invective against Yarbro Collins and makes the mistake of confusing “language” with “usage”—*langue* with *parole*. In this study we have sought to avoid this error by rejecting a philological approach in favour of a study of narrative context and cross-cultural themes.

<sup>151</sup> “Punishment is to be inflicted on Hymenaeus and Alexander, who have so disastrously veered from the faith, but hope remains that they may learn their lesson” (R. F. Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A Commentary* [Louisville; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002], 50).

<sup>152</sup> I. H. Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles* (The International Critical Commentary; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 415.



Satan. If, like Marshall, we focus upon 2 Timothy, then there are other passages which are more instructive than 2 Timothy 2:25. For example, the “Lord” is to avenge Paul for the harm done to him by Alexander: “Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will pay him back for his deeds” (2 Timothy 4:14).<sup>153</sup>

If παιδεύω is understood euphemistically, physical suffering or even death may be envisaged. However, crucially, even if παιδεύω is read in terms of discipline with a view to repentance, there is nothing to suggest that such “learning” cannot take place through physical suffering.<sup>154</sup> In which instance, a curse may also be envisaged (even if παρέδωκα τῷ Σατανᾷ is taken to indicate exclusion).

1 Timothy 1:20 resonates strongly with 1 Corinthians 5:5. Whilst we must remain cautious as to its meaning (in particular, due to the paucity of curse material in the Pastorals), there are strong indications that a curse is envisaged. Furthermore, even those who would seek to interpret παρέδωκα τῷ Σατανᾷ in terms of exclusion are unsuccessful in precluding a curse interpretation: for παιδεύω could entail physical suffering in this context.

### 3.4.2.2 Job 1:12; 2:6

The LORD said to Satan, “Very well, all that he has is in your power; only do not stretch out you hand against him!” So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD...The LORD said to Satan, “Very well, he is in your power; only spare his life” (Job 1:12; 2:6).

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<sup>153</sup> Cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:6 (which is reminiscent of the *lex talionis*: “an eye for an eye”): “For it is indeed just of God to repay with affliction those who afflict you”.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. Hebrews 12:5-11 (“Now, discipline [παιδεία] always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” [verse 11]).

The story of Job's "handing over" to the Satan (Job 1:12; 2:6) presents an interesting resonance with 1 Corinthians 5:5,<sup>155</sup> due to its fuller context (than 1 Timothy 1:20). The scene that occasions the beginning of Job's protracted suffering is a short conversation between God and the Satan (השטן: LXX, ὁ διάβολος [verse 1:12]). Surprisingly, it is Yahweh who first draws the Satan's attention towards Job, whom he extols as an exemplary human being. The Accuser does not dispute Job's righteous character, but instead questions his motives: Job would not follow God if God's protection and "blessing" was removed from his life. Rather, if Job was to suffer the loss of "all that he had", he would "curse" (ברך<sup>156</sup>) God to his very "face":<sup>157</sup>

Yahweh accepts the Satan's challenge, and on the Satan's terms, except that He delegates to the Satan the work of destruction, instead of performing it Himself...Yahweh empowers him to do what he likes with all that Job possesses.<sup>158</sup>

Thus, God places into his agent's (the Satan's) "hand" all that Job possesses: בידך כל-אשר-לו (LXX: πάντα ὅσα ἐστὶν αὐτῷ δίδωμι ἐν τῇ χειρὶ σου). The phrase "hand" should be interpreted figuratively. The *NRSV*'s paraphrased rendering of יד as "power" in this context is persuasive. Following the Septuagint, all Job's possessions are given over (δίδωμι) to the Satan's control—they are at the mercy of his "power".

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<sup>155</sup> As many scholars have noted: cf. Chrysostom (*Homily*, 15:4. Cf. part 1.2.1.1); Forkman (*Limits*, 143. Cf. part 1.1.5); Käsemann ("Sentences of Holy Law", 71); Wiles (*Intercessory*, 148 n. 2, 5. Cf. part 1.1.6); South ("Critique", 539-561 at 551). Alternatively, as we have noted elsewhere (in part 1.1.2), Dobschütz considers the handing over of Job to Satan to be "heterogeneous" (Dobschütz, *Christian Life*, 390).

<sup>156</sup> Cf. Job 1:5, 11; 2:5, 9 (in which the English term "curse" renders ברך); and 3:1 (in which the English term "curse" translates קלל, 8 (MT: נקב and ארר); 5:3 (MT: נקב); 24:18 (קלל); 31:30:.

ברכו "blessed", is (as commonly recognized) a euphemism for קלל or נאצו, "cursed", and apparently a mere "scribal substitution" (Tiqqun sopherim) for the objectionable expression. The same substitution occurs below, v.11; II, 5 and 9; I Kings XXI, 10 and 13, and Ps. X, 3, where the original expression is preserved beside the substitute (נאצו ברך) (N. H. Tur-Sinai, *The Book of Job: A New Commentary* [Jerusalem: Kiryath Sepher, 1957], 9).

<sup>157</sup> It is unclear what form of curse the Accuser anticipates Job will utter under duress.

<sup>158</sup> S. R. Driver and G. B. Gray, *Job* (The International Critical Commentary; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1921), 13-14. Cf. Exodus 12:23, 2 Samuel 24:16-17; 2 Kings 19:35; Isaiah 54:15; and Revelation 15:6 in which various angels are empowered to bring about destruction on Yahweh's behalf.



However, Job himself remains outwith the Satan's influence (v. 12).

In the following seven verses (13-20) Job suffers the loss of his children (that is, one of his possessions), yet in mourning he blesses God (verses 20-21). The Satan's first assault upon Job has failed. Thus, the Accuser approaches God for a second time, in a dialogue that closely mirrors the form of their previous conversation (in verses 6-12).

First Job's possessions are taken from him, yet Job does not "curse" (ברך) God. Now the Accuser wishes to directly target Job in the hope that he will yet "curse" (ברך) God. As before, God agrees to Satan's proposal—with the caveat that Job's "life" (נפש: LXX, ψυχῆς) must be "spared":<sup>159</sup> "Very well, he is in your power [הנן בידך]; only spare his life" (Job 2:6). Firstly, we should note that the only reason Job's נפש is not in danger of destruction is because God has expressly stated such. The fact that this is stated suggests that Satan might have taken Job's life if God had not limited his power on this occasion.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 5:5 in which the immoral Corinthian is "handed over to Satan" that his "flesh" might be "destroyed". However, the "spirit" (πνεῦμα)—possibly his "spirit"—is to be "saved in the day of the Lord" (cf. part 3.4.5).

The Second Temple writing *Testament of Job* (20:3), dated to either the first century B.C.E., or the first century C.E., re-casts the canonical book of Job. As Knibb argues, "T. Job presupposes the existence of the biblical book of Job and draws much from the narrative framework (Job 1 and 2, 42.7-17), but only very little from the main part of the book (e.g. remarks on Job's wealth, piety and generosity in T. Job 9-16, cf. Job 29-31). Without doubt T. Job makes use of the LXX version of the book" (M. A. Knibb and P. W. van der Horst, *Studies on the Testament of Job* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989] 121 n. 16).

In the *Testament of Job*, the 'handing over' of Job to Satan also employs a form of παραδίδωμι: καὶ τότε παρέδωκέν με ὁ κύριος εἰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ χρή<σα>σθαι τῷ σώματί μου ὡς ἡβούλετο, τῆς δὲ ψυχῆς μου οὐκ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ἐξουσίαν (R. A. Kraft [ed.], *The Testament of Job* [Missoula, Montana: Society of Biblical Literature and Scholars' Press, 1974], 42).

Allison notes that in the *Testament of Job* (at 20:3) "the devil has authority over Job's σῶμα but not his ψυχῆ" (W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* [3 vols.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988-1997], 206).

<sup>160</sup> Cf. Part 3.4.3 for further discussion.

Whilst the Massoretic Text contains the phrase בִּידָךְ in both Job 1:12 and 2:6, the Septuagint's rendering of the Massoretic Text contains some interesting linguistic variations:

Job 1:12:	
NRSV	“all that he has is in your power”
MT	כֹּל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ בְּיָדְךָ
LXX	“all that he has is handed over into your hand” πάντα ὅσα ἐστὶν αὐτῷ δίδωμι ἐν τῇ χειρὶ σου <sup>161</sup>
Job 2:6:	
NRSV	“he is in your power”
MT	הֵן בְּיָדְךָ
LXX	“I hand you over to him” παραδίδωμί σοι αὐτόν

When Job 2:6 is interpreted literally, some intriguing divergences emerge between the Hebrew text and its English and Greek translations:

NRSV	“he is in your power”
MT	הֵן בְּיָדְךָ: “he is in your hand”
LXX	παραδίδωμί σοι αὐτόν: “I hand him over to you”

Ball seeks to explain the difference between the Massoretic Text and the Septuagint by arguing that “παραδίδωμί σοι αὐτόν hardly denotes any difference of reading from [the Massoretic Text]...It is merely an elegant paraphrase of a Hebraism.”<sup>162</sup> This argument is correct insofar as the overall meaning of the Massoretic Text and the Septuagint is in harmony. In both instances, Job ends up in Satan's malevolent “power”. However, whilst this is explicit in the Massoretic Text, it is implicit in the Septuagint (to be “handed over” [παραδίδωμί σοι] to the Accuser is to be within his sphere of his “power”).

<sup>161</sup> Dhorme notes that Codex Alexandrinus features δέδωκα, whilst the Targum features כִּסִּיף: “delivered to” (E. Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job* [London: Nelson, 1967], 8).

<sup>162</sup> C. J. Ball, *The Book Of Job* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922), 113.



Whilst there is no curse nuance intrinsic to the phrase παραδίδωμί σοι,<sup>163</sup> when a person is handed over to a supernatural agent to suffer harm (in Job's case, he suffers the loss of his property, including his children [Job 1:13-22], and his health [Job 2:1-10]) a curse may be implied. Forkman argues strongly in favour of this conclusion:

Satan receives God's permission to revoke the blessing over Job (1:10), and then, reminiscent of Deut. 28, it is described how the curses come over him. His cattle is stolen or destroyed by the fire of God (Job 1:14-17; cf. Deut. 28:18, 31). His sons and daughters perish (Job 1:18f cf. Deut. 28:32). He is afflicted with severe abscesses from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head (Job 2:7; Deut. 28:35).<sup>164</sup>

However, it is questionable whether this use of παραδίδωμί σοι is a formal curse—for it is God who “hands over” Job to Satan.<sup>165</sup> What is clear, as Horsley argues, is that given the linguistic resonance, it is reasonable to suppose that 1 Corinthians 5:5

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<sup>163</sup> Although, the context of παραδίδωμι frequently entails woe in Tanakh. Παραδίδωμι is commonly rendered by the Hebrew term נתן. However, it is also a translation of יהב (e.g. Daniel 3:28), מצא (e.g. Zechariah 11:6), סגר (e.g. Job 16:11; Psalm 78:47-48), פגע (e.g. Isaiah 53:6) and שלם (e.g., Ezra 9:7) in the Septuagint.

Yahweh is most often the subject and agent of the verb παραδίδωμι in Tanakh. He is the one with the supernatural power to “hand over” “cattle to the hail”, (Psalms 78:48 [גר: LXX, παραδίδωμι,) or a human being, potentially, “to death” (Psalms 118:18 [נתן: LXX, παραδίδωμι]). It should be noted that in this instance the Psalmist states that whilst the LORD has gravely punished him, he has not handed [him] over to death. The Israelites are threatened with the punishment of being “handed over” to their enemies if they break the covenant. For example, in Deuteronomy 1:27 the Israelites are ‘handed over’ into the “hand” of the Amorites to be destroyed (LXX: παραδοῦναι ἡμᾶς εἰς χεῖρας Αμορραίων ἐξολεθρεῦσαι ἡμᾶς). Again, in Judges 2:14-15, the Israelites are “handed over” to their enemies as a punishment for their idolatry. Finally, Oholibah—‘Jerusalem’—is ‘handed over’ (נתן: LXX, παραδίδωμι) by the LORD God to those she “hates” (Ezekiel 23:28).

Ezra retells Israel's history in terms of God's chastening. Because of her “iniquities”, Israel, the kings and priests, “have been handed over [שלם: LXX, παραδίδωμι] to the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plundering, and to utter shame, as is now the case (Ezra 9:7). Tobit gives a précis of Israel's history in a similar manner, adding that having been “handed over” to “plunder, exile, and death” the Israelites became “an object of reproach [or a “curse”] among all the nations” (Tobit 3:4).

It is also possible for humans to be “handed over” by other humans (1 Samuel 30:15), such as in the case of a human slave who is “handed over” by another human agent to a master (Deuteronomy 23:15).

<sup>164</sup> Forkman, *Limits*, 143.

<sup>165</sup> It is crucial that we differentiate between divine/supernatural agency and divine/supernatural cursing. Whereas in the former, it is the agent who enacts the curse on behalf of another, in the latter the agent (a divine or supernatural being) is also the subject of the curse.



“recall[s] God’s address to Satan at Job 2.6, παραδίδωμί σοι αὐτόν.”<sup>166</sup> Due to Satan’s agency, Job suffers a wretched existence. Given the wide use of the παραδίδωμί σοι language, there is no need to preclude any further resonances.

### 3.4.2.3 Be accursed—Galatians 1:8-9; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 16:22

But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed [ἀνάθεμα ἔστω]! As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed [ἀνάθεμα ἔστω]! (Galatians 1:8-9)

Let him be condemned to hell! (Galatians 1:8: *Good News Bible*).

In Galatians 1:8-9, Betz rightly argues (as we will show) that Paul utters a double curse.<sup>167</sup> Initially, the curse takes the form of a conditional self-curse which is extended to others (“if we...should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed” [verse 8. Emphasis added]).<sup>168</sup> Betz correctly suggests that the “co-senders of the letter” are implied in the ἡμεῖς (verse 8).<sup>169</sup> Alongside humans, this curse is extended to include an “angel from heaven” (verse 8). However, “[i]n actuality of course, Paul has his opponents and, potentially, the Galatians in mind—should they go over to the opponents.”<sup>170</sup> Paul expresses a similar sentiment (to that expressed in verse eight) in the following verse, where again he concludes with the words: ἀνάθεμα ἔστω. For Betz, this phrase implies:

the magical concept according to which the curse [denoted by ἀνάθεμα] as it is set down

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<sup>166</sup> Horsley, “παραδίδωμι”, 165. Horsley (“παραδίδωμι”, 165) also considers 1 Timothy 1:20 as recalling Job 2:6.

<sup>167</sup> H. D. Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 50.

<sup>168</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 52. Betz (*Galatians*, 53) notes that “the conditional ‘self-curse’ avoids the outright act of cursing others, and thus respects the early Christian prohibition of cursing.” However, it is unlikely that Paul understood it as an impediment to passing judgment.

<sup>169</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 52. Cf. Galatians 1:2.

<sup>170</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 52.



in writing becomes automatically effective whenever the conditions of v8a are fulfilled.<sup>171</sup>

However, whilst there is little doubt as to the conditional nature of this curse, the issue of agency remains a matter of debate. For example, in contrast to Betz, Martyn argues confidently in favour of divine agency in this context:

Both the Greek and the Israelite know that a human being does not truly have the power to curse something. The most one can do is to deliver it to God, so that, in accordance with his own purposes, God can curse it.<sup>172</sup>

However, in actuality, this differs from divine cursing, for without the human action of delivering a person to God to be cursed, a curse would not be effected. Martyn points to the function of ἀνάθεμα in the Septuagint (MT: חרם) and in wider Hellenistic use to undergird his argument.<sup>173</sup> Similarly, we will follow his prompting by exploring ἀνάθεμα and חרם in Tanakh:

חרם seems to have the basic meaning of “refuse”, “forbid” and forms, in the Old Testament usage, somewhat of a negative counterpart to קדש. That which is dedicated to a god other than Yahweh, is forbidden for Israel. It must be “devoted”, given over to annihilation or be withdrawn from ordinary use [i.e. banned] by being reserved for Yahweh.<sup>174</sup>

In particular, חרם features in the context of war in which the Israelites’ enemies were “devoted” to Yahweh through destruction. Thus, in 1 Samuel 15, the Amalekites are “utterly destroyed” (חרם): “man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey” (verse 3). Again, in Joshua 6:17, Jericho is “devoted to the LORD for destruction [חרם]”. The Israelites are instructed to:

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<sup>171</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 53.

<sup>172</sup> J. L. Martyn, *Galatians* (The Anchor Bible Commentary, Doubleday: New York, 1997), 114.

<sup>173</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 144.

<sup>174</sup> Forkman, *Limits*, 21.

keep away from the things devoted to destruction [חרם], so as not to covet and take any of the devoted things [חרם] and make the camp of Israel an object for destruction [חרם], bringing trouble upon it. But all silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are sacred [קדש] to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD (Joshua 6:18-19).

The Israelites destroy Jericho—the city which has been devoted to Yahweh (Joshua 6:24). However, they sin against Yahweh by taking that which is devoted to him—that which is חרם—for themselves (Joshua 7:11).<sup>175</sup> As such, they themselves become חרם (Joshua 7:12). As Forkman explains:

That which is captured in a holy war must be regarded as most holy. It must not be bought or sold; it must not even be touched (Deut. 13:18). He who takes that which is “devoted” must himself be “devoted”.<sup>176</sup>

Aust and Müller rightly note that exclusion<sup>177</sup> and ban are “always different measures”:

In excommunication those referred to are exiled from the community and so from the sphere of salvation, but they are not, as in the case of the banned, directly given over to God and destroyed.<sup>178</sup>

Nevertheless, exclusion is often implicit in the ban-curse (חרם), for that which is devoted to God for destruction (as we have noted) is circumscribed, banned, taboo. Thus, when the Israelites,<sup>179</sup> and their possessions,<sup>180</sup> are devoted to Yahweh through destruction, exclusion is implicit.

Scholars often point to Ezra 10:8 as a point of transition between the use of חרם as a curse term—and a later use to denote exclusion alone. As such, they interpret the use of

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<sup>175</sup> When something is חרם, it is banned—or under a curse.

<sup>176</sup> Forkman, *Limits*, 21.

<sup>177</sup> They use the term “excommunication”.

<sup>178</sup> Aust and Müller, “Curse”, 413-415 at 414.

<sup>179</sup> Cf. Exodus 22:19; Deuteronomy 7:26; 13:14; Isaiah 43:28; Jeremiah 25:9; Zechariah 14:11; Malachi 3:24.

<sup>180</sup> Cf. Leviticus 27:21, 28; Numbers 18:14; Ezra 10:8; Ezekiel 44:29.



ἀνάθεμα in Galatians 1:8-9 as a reference to mere exclusion. However, Forkman<sup>181</sup> and Morland<sup>182</sup> demonstrate that there is no evidence of this use of חרם (to denote exclusion alone) before the third century C. E.<sup>183</sup> Concerning Ezra 10:8, Forkman rightly concludes:

In Ezra 10:8 things, not people, are declared as חרם, while expulsion of people is indicated by בדל. Not until the third century A. D. do we find חרם in rabbinic literature for describing a disciplinary measure. When it comes to throwing light on later expulsion procedures the OT חרם has very little relevance.<sup>184</sup>

Even if חרם (LXX: ἀνάθεμα) were to have the sense of exclusion alone in first-century usage, which appears unlikely, there are internal reasons to reject this understanding of the term in Galatians 1:8-9. As Fung remarks:

The fearful verdict, “let him be anathema”...can hardly mean being “held outcast,” that is, excommunicated, since it envisages an angel as a possible object. It thus more likely means being delivered up and devoted to the judicial wrath of God.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Forkman, *Limits*, 92. Forkman and Morland follow Hunzinger (C. H. Hunzinger, “Die jüdische Bannpraxis im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter”, unpublished dissertation, Göttingen, 1954).

<sup>182</sup> K. A. Morland, *The Galatian Choice: Galatians 1:6-12 and 3:8-14 in the Light of Jewish Curse-Texts and Antique Rhetoric* (Oslo, Trondheim, 1991), 11.

<sup>183</sup> Cf. Lightfoot (J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* [London: Macmillan and Co., 1902], 78) who as early as 1902 concludes similarly in a discussion of ἀνάθεμα in Galatians 1:8:

[ἀνάθεμα] is the LXX. translation of the Hebrew חרם...This word is used in the Old Testament of a person or thing set apart and devoted to destruction, because hateful to God [*sic*]...it seems never to signify ‘excommunicated,’ a sense which is not found till much later than the Christian era...Here, for instance, it is inconsistent with the ἄγγελος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ. In course of time [*sic*] ἀνάθεμα, like the corresponding חרם, underwent a change of meaning, getting to signify ‘excommunicated,’ and this is the common patristic sense of the word. It was not unnatural therefore, that the fathers should attempt to force upon St Paul the ecclesiastical sense with which they were most familiar, as Theodoret does for instance, on I Cor. xvi. 22.

Behm (J. Behm, “ἀνάθεμα, ἀνάθημα, κατάθεμα”, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 1.354-355) strengthens Lightfoot's conclusion by adding that “We can hardly think of an act of Church discipline, since the apostle uses the phrase ἀπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ (R. 9:3) and also considers that an angel from heaven (Gl. 1:8) or even Jesus himself (1 C. 12:3) might be accursed.”

<sup>184</sup> Forkman, *Limits*, 22. (J. D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* [London: A & C Black, 1993], 47). However, note that חרם features in the context of expulsion (בדל).

<sup>185</sup> R. Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (New International Commentary on the New Testament, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 47 (similarly: Aust and Müller, “Curse”, 414-415). Unless Paul imagined that the Corinthians would not recognise an “angel from heaven”, or that having identified the angelic being, the Corinthians could be persuaded to exclude the messenger from the community. Again, as Fung states, this does not seem as likely as the alternative understanding of ἀνάθεμα in this

The Pauline term ἀνάθεμα (MT: 𐤀𐤒𐤏) in Galatians 1:8-9, is a variant of the Classical term ἀνάθημα. We have noted the use of ἀνάθεμα, and also ἀνάθημα, (in part 2.2.3.2) as part of a binding curse contained on a first or second century C.E. lead tablet, discovered in Megara (which is north east of Corinth).<sup>186</sup> In that context, ἀνάθεμα features in a curse text that intended to visit the “punishments of hell” upon its victim.<sup>187</sup>

In the New Testament, there is evidence that ἀνάθεμα has retained its positive sense of votive offering,<sup>188</sup> for in Luke 21:5, the temple is described as being “adorned with beautiful stones and *gifts dedicated to God* [ἀνάθεμα]” (emphasis added).<sup>189</sup> However, apart from this isolated instance, ἀνάθεμα is used negatively like 𐤀𐤒𐤏 in Tanakh.

On the basis of the Septuagintal rendering of 𐤀𐤒𐤏 as ἀνάθεμα: “devote to God for destruction”, and a similar negative use of ἀνάθεμα within the context of ancient cursing, it is likely that a comparable use exists in Galatians 1:8-9. In light of this understanding, Martyn<sup>190</sup> and Betz<sup>191</sup> both note a similarity between Paul’s curse here, in Galatians 1:8-9, and in 1 Corinthians 5:<sup>192</sup>

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context.

Paul’s use of ἀνάθεμα in 1 Corinthians 12:3 is conclusive, for whilst the phrase Ἐνάθεμα Ἰησοῦς is perplexing—as we will see, it is explicable to a more satisfactory extent than if we were to understand this phrase in terms of Jesus’ exclusion.

<sup>186</sup> DT 41:A, B.

<sup>187</sup> Versnel, “Beyond”, 65. Cf. Gager who argues that Paul’s use of ἀνάθεμα “designates a powerful oath, consigning the target to death” (Gager, *Curse*, 183 n. 14).

<sup>188</sup> Cf. Leviticus 27:21, 28; Numbers 18:14; Ezekiel 44:29.

<sup>189</sup> Cf. 2 Maccabees 2:13; Judith 16:18.

<sup>190</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 114.

<sup>191</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 53 n. 90.

<sup>192</sup> Another clear resonance is with 1 Timothy 1 in which certain individuals were teaching a “different teaching” (ἑτεροδιδασκαλέω. cf. 1 Timothy 6:3). Hymenaeus and Alexander appear guilty



The resulting point is similar to that of 1 Cor 5:3-5. Paul means to say: “If some person is preaching a false gospel to you, he is to be removed from your community and delivered (along with his alleged angel!) to God, who will curse him.” Later (4:30) Paul will quote a passage in which he hears scripture commanding the Galatians to remove the Teachers from their midst.<sup>193</sup>

Thus, like παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ, in which the errant Corinthian is “handed over” to Satan, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω denotes a similar “handing over”, or rather a “devotion” of another to be cursed.<sup>194</sup> A similar sense is likely at the close of Paul’s letter in 1 Corinthians 16:22, in which Paul’s benediction contains the following words: “Let anyone be accursed [ἀνάθεμα] who has no love for the Lord. Our Lord, come! [μαράνα θά]”.<sup>195</sup> In an intriguing discussion of πνευματικός in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul states that nobody “speaking by the Spirit” can say Ἀνάθεμα Ἰησοῦς (v. 3):

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of this charge, and are (as we discussed in part 3.4.2.1) “handed over to Satan” (1 Timothy 1:19-20).

<sup>193</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 114.

<sup>194</sup> South (*Disciplinary*, 125) disagrees by claiming that these passages are not “parallel”. However, rather than considering the suggested conceptual similarities between the use of ἀνάθεμα ἔστω (Galatians 1:8-9) and παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ (1 Corinthians 5:5) as a form of cursing, he mistakenly points out superficial contextual differences such as the fact that “There is no necessity for the church to be assembled or for Paul to be ‘present in spirit’” in Galatians 1, as in 1 Corinthians 5 (South, *Disciplinary*, 125). South (*Disciplinary*, 125) concludes: “There is really nothing to connect the two expressions other than the assumption that they are parallel”.

Contrary to South, we are not arguing that ἀνάθεμα ἔστω and παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ are “parallel”, but that they are conceptually related (when ἀνάθεμα is employed negatively) in the sense that παραδίδωμι, καταγράφω, κατατίθημι, ἀνατίθημι, ἀνιερῶ, and παραθίτομαι resonate (cf. part 2.2).

<sup>195</sup> Cf. Aust and Müller, “Curse”, 413-415 at 414-415. Paul’s use of ἀνάθεμα also features outside of his use of ἀνάθεμα in Romans 9:3: “For I could wish that I myself were accursed [ἀνάθεμα] and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh (Romans 9:3).” Cf. Peter’s self-curse in Mark 14:71 in which ἀναθεματίζειν features (//Matthew 26:74 in which καταθεματίζειν appears). Furthermore, cf. Acts 23:12, 14, 21; Revelation 22:3.

Most commentators agree that ἀνάθεμα functions in a similar manner in this passage (“as devote to destruction”) to Paul’s other usages (for example, cf. C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* [London: A & C Black, 1957], 176; C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* [The International Critical Commentary; 2 vols; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979], 2.457-458; J. A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* [The Anchor Bible Commentary; New York: Doubleday, 1993], 544; J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* [2 vols; London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1965], 2.3). Bornkamm (G. Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience* [London: SCM Press, 1969], 169) relates Paul’s ἀνάθεμα saying in 1 Corinthians 16:22 to a liturgy in the context of the Lord’s Supper:

The Anathema has the purpose of excluding the unworthy at the beginning of the celebration of the meal from sharing the sacrament...the Maranatha appeals to the heavenly judge and lends threatening emphasis to the Anathema. Thus the formula belongs in the sphere of sacral law. It contains no disciplinary direction for any kind of human initiative (the congregation or a college of judges)...Rather, it expresses the



Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says “Let Jesus be cursed!” [Ἀνάθεμα Ἰησοῦς] and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3).

By this, most commentators understand that the Corinthians were cursing Jesus.<sup>196</sup>

However, Behm notes the illogicality of this act for “[i]t would be a self-contradiction for the Christian pneumatic to curse Jesus, i.e., to deliver Him up to destruction by God.”<sup>197</sup> Furthermore, as Barrett states: “It is not easy to conceive the circumstances in which one might cry out, Jesus is anathema, and be in danger of supposing that he was inspired by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>198</sup>

Winter presents us with an intriguing alternative. On the basis of the form of cursing contained in curse tablets (cf. part 2.2), Winter argues that Jesus is the agent of the Corinthians’ curse:

If, in the case of the curse tablet against Karpime Babbia, Ἑρμῇ χθόνιε τὰ μεγάλα is translated following the literary convention of not providing a verb as in the Corinthian tablet, ‘Hermes of the Underworld [grant] a curse’, then it would not be unreasonable to render ANAΘEMA IHΣΟΥΣ as ‘Jesus [grants or gives] a curse’. Paul would not have needed to insert the verb given the strong precedent for its absence.<sup>199</sup>

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decision as coming from God for the given situation and leaves the transgressor to the judging punishment of God” (Bornkamm, *Early*, 170-171).

In contrast, Ziesler (*Paul’s Letter to the Romans* [London: SCM Press, 1989], 236) maintains that “by now [ἀνάθεμα] had become a formula of excommunication”. We have argued that such a meaning (most notably in relation to Galatians 1:8-9) was not envisaged by Paul.

<sup>196</sup> For example, cf. W. F. Orr and J. A. Walther, *1 Corinthians* (The Anchor Bible Commentary; Doubleday: Garden City, New York, 1976), 367.

<sup>197</sup> Behm, “ἀνάθεμα”, 354.

<sup>198</sup> Barrett, *Corinthians*, 279.

<sup>199</sup> B. W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: W. B. Eerdmans, 2001), 176. It should be noted that whilst Winter does not discuss 1 Corinthians 5:5, he clearly affirms Paul’s knowledge of curse tablets and their relevance to the Corinthians. His comments concerning ‘paganism’ make it unlikely that he could conceive of such “pagan” “influence” in Paul’s thought.



Moreover, this suggestion has merit, because it is likely that the Corinthians would have understood Jesus as functioning in the same way as Hermes. Victims can be devoted to, or “handed over”, to Hermes to be cursed. Like Hermes, Jesus also has the power to curse those placed in his authority.

Whilst Winter’s discussion is undermined by his discussion of “pagan thinking” which influences the “religious perceptions” of the Corinthians,<sup>200</sup> his argument has merit insofar as it offers a convincing explanation of a previously perplexing Corinthian phenomenon.

We have argued that Paul’s command to the Corinthians: παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ, resonates with his use of ἀνάθεμα—in the sense of “devote to God for destruction”. In turn, we will recall in our following discussion that this language is part of a wider conception of cursing.

#### 3.4.2.4 Jewish and Graeco-Roman Curse Traditions

In part two, we demonstrated the existence of a cross-cultural—Jewish, Greek, and Roman—curse tradition, which was in evidence across a wide geographical locale, and which continued over many centuries. Cursing in the *Dead Sea Scrolls* (cf. part 2.3) resonated with cursing in Tanakh (in an adapted form to the needs of the community), where it was in evidence in a liturgical context.<sup>201</sup> In particular, Deuteronomic cursing features prominently in cursing in the *Dead Sea Scrolls*, as in Paul’s discussion in 1 Corinthians 5 (and elsewhere). Most frequently Belial is cursed, through divine agency,

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<sup>200</sup> Winter, *After*, 166. Winter (*After*, 170) does accept the existence of Christian cursing. However, he mistakenly interprets this as an inability to “shake off the cultural convention of pagans.”

<sup>201</sup> Interestingly, Havener (cf. part 1.1.7), and more recently Hurtado (*Lord*, 117), have suggested a liturgical context for the curse in verse 5.

as his destruction is sought. Furthermore, the language of Tanakh also resonated with selected curse tablets (cf. part 2.2),<sup>202</sup> *GMP* (cf. part 2.4),<sup>203</sup> and *Sepher ha-Razim* (cf. part 2.5).

In addition to exploring a more generic understanding of cursing, we also demonstrated the existence of a specific common *form* of cursing in which an individual is “handed over” to a chthonic deity, god, or angel. Unlike those scholars (such as Dobschütz [cf. part 1.1.2], Deissmann [cf. part 1.1.3], Conzelmann [cf. part 1.1.4], and Yarbrow Collins [part 1.1.8]) who focussed predominantly upon the occurrence of the phrase παραδίδωμί σοι in *GMP* (as a so-called “parallel” with 1 Corinthians 5:5), we showed that Paul’s words παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ resonated far beyond *GMP*.

As such, we examined not only occurrences of παραδίδωμί σοι within the context of cursing (in part 2.2.3.1), but also other terminology that functioned similarly to παραδίδωμι in the context of ancient cursing: καταγράφω (in part 2.2.3.2); κατατίθημι, ἀνατίθημι, ἀνιερῶ, and παραθίτομαι (in part 2.2.3.3); *dono*, *mando*, and *trado* (in part 2.2.3.4). Furthermore, we broadened the geographical, and chronological, range of the material by highlighting uses of this specific form of cursing throughout our study in part 2.

Within the context of ancient cursing, one could “hand over” a person to a metaphysical agent who was entrusted with inflicting various forms of malevolent consequences. For example, “Mighty Typhon, I hand over to you Tyche [παραδίδωμί σοι Τύχην], whom

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<sup>202</sup> Cf. *DT* 41:A, B.

<sup>203</sup> For example, note our discussion of the *Prayer of Jacob* (*PGM* 22b:1-26).



Sophia bore, that you may do her harm”.<sup>204</sup> In this curse the victim (‘Tyche’) is handed over to “Mighty Typhon” (chthonic agent) to suffer harm. As we argued, παραδίδωμι (and other similar functioning terminology) is a technical term that should not be understood literally. Instead, in this context (as elsewhere) to hand over means to place the person in the authority of the agent invoked, so that they might execute the malevolent request.

The resonance between this form of cursing and verse 5 is commanding. We have already contextualised 1 Corinthians 5 within a wider context of cursing (cf. part 3.2.1); now, in verse 5, Paul calls upon the Corinthians to hand the errant Corinthian over to Satan. As one would expect, Paul’s understanding of this curse configuration is contextualised within his Judaeo-Christian tradition.<sup>205</sup> Thus, it is not into Tyche’s authority that the πορνή is placed, but into Satan’s.

As in the above curse involving Tyche, Paul intends for Satan to inflict malevolent consequences upon the errant Corinthian—for to do such is in keeping with his role within the biblical world of the first century (cf. part 3.4.3). In a wider context, Paul expects the man to suffer physical harm and probably death as a result of this curse, for his sin can be understood within a wider stream of Pauline and biblical thought within which sin arouses this kind of malevolent consequence (cf. part 3.4.4).

When interpreted in this light, Paul’s words παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ signal that the errant Corinthian is to be handed over to Satan’s authority. On its own,

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<sup>204</sup> Inv. No. Il 1737 (Jordan, “Agora”, 253). Cf. part 2.2.3.1.

<sup>205</sup> Beyond Paul’s own practice of cursing, we have noted Paul’s awareness of the Corinthian’s use of cursing in part 3.4.2.3.

the designation of this phrase as a curse depends on one's assessment of the role of Satan, to which we will now turn.

### 3.4.3 Satan and Human Suffering

In parts 3.2 and 3.4.2, we argued that Paul's words παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ chime with a wider cross-cultural language of Jewish and Graeco-Roman cursing—in which humans are handed over to Satan (cf. parts 3.4.2.1-3.4.2.2), and other chthonic deities (cf. part 3.4.2.4). In this section, we will consider Satan's role in the mechanics of this Pauline curse in the New Testament. Specifically, we will consider the relationship between Satan and human suffering. In relation to Paul, we will argue that Satan is presented as one who causes malevolent consequences, including physical human suffering. Even when inflicting such harm, his malevolent deeds can unwittingly work for righteous—and even salvific—purposes.

Satan is frequently associated with human suffering and death in biblical literature. As we have seen in the account of Job's handing over to the Satan (cf. part 3.4.2.2),<sup>206</sup> Job not only loses his possessions (which includes his family), but he also suffers physical harm. Whilst *his* death is ruled out (note, Job's family are killed [Job 1:19]), we have argued that the only reason Job's נַפְשׁוֹ is not in danger of the Satan's destruction is because God has expressly forbidden it (cf. part 3.4.2.2). Once again, as we argued previously, the fact that this is stated suggests that the Satan might have taken Job's life, if God had not limited his power on this occasion. As such, in the light of Job (which we have argued that Paul alludes to), death cannot be excluded as a possible infliction by Satan in 1 Corinthians 5:5.

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<sup>206</sup> Cf. Zechariah 3:1, in which Satan (the Accuser) occupies a similar accusatory role to Job 1-2. For a full discussion of the Satan in Tanakh, cf. P. L. Day, *An Adversary in Heaven: šātān* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988).



In Luke 22:3, Εἰσῆλθεν δὲ Σατανᾶς εἰς Ἰούδαν,<sup>207</sup> following which Judas conspires to “hand over” Jesus to the authorities to be crucified (Luke 22:4, 47).<sup>208</sup> In Luke 13:16, a woman who has been physically crippled for eighteen years is described as having been “bound by Satan” (ἣν ἔδησεν ὁ σατανᾶς).<sup>209</sup> John 8:44 describes the “devil” as a “murderer from the beginning”,<sup>210</sup> whilst Hebrews 2:14 attributes the “devil” with “the power of death”. The devil is also responsible for persecuting Christians—even till death.<sup>211</sup> Satan—the “adversary” (ἀντίδικος)—can “abuse” (λοιδορία) and has attracted people who have “turned away” (ἐκτρέπω) to follow after him (1 Timothy 5:14-15). Again, in 2 Timothy 2:26, it is the “Devil” (διάβολος) who ensnares (παγίς), whilst in the account of Ananias and Sapphira (which we will explore in part 3.4.4.3), Satan is implicated in Ananias’ lie to the “Holy Spirit” (Acts 5:3), for which Ananias suffers physical death (Acts 5:5).

In Pauline thought, Satan is portrayed as: an enemy whose destruction is imminent (Romans 16:20); yet at present he “tempts” or “tests” (πειράζω: 1 Corinthians 7:5),<sup>212</sup>

<sup>207</sup> Cf. John 13:27: εἰσῆλθεν εἰς ἐκεῖνον ὁ Σατανᾶς.

<sup>208</sup> Judas “hands over” Jesus (Luke 22:47//Mark 14:43-50//Matthew 26:47-56. Cf. John 18:3-11), and Jesus is subsequently killed (Luke 23:44-49//Mark 15:33-41//Matthew 27:45-56. Cf. John 19:28-30). W. Klassen (*Judas: Betrayer or Friend of Jesus?* [London: SCM Press, 1996], 56) rightly argues that the use of παραδίδωμι here should be translated as “hand over”, without assuming betrayal (which he judges to be the least likely interpretation).

<sup>209</sup> Like Satan, demons can also afflict humans with physical suffering. For example, the Gerasene demoniac is described as “bruising himself with stones” (Mark 5:5). Another man is unable to speak, because he is possessed by a demon (Matthew 9:32-34). Again, a demon makes a man mute and blind in Matthew 12:22. Luke recounts the dramatic physical suffering of a demoniac boy: “Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It convulses him until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him” (Luke 9:39. Cf. Matthew 17:14-20).

<sup>210</sup> Cf. 1 John 3:18.

<sup>211</sup> Revelation 2:10. Cf. Revelation 12:17; 13:7.

<sup>212</sup> As we have seen, the Satan’s primary role in Job is as one who tests. Cf. Matthew 6:13: “And do not bring us to the time of trial [πειρασμός], but rescue us from the evil one [ὁ πονηρός]”; Luke 22:31-32: “Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift [σινιάζω] all of you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” Cf. Luke 4:1-13; 22:28.

and is a wily adversary (2 Corinthians 2:11) who “disguises himself as an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14). Satan is able to impact upon Paul’s freedom of movement by preventing him from visiting the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 2:18). In 2 Corinthians 12:7-9, one of Satan’s messengers (ἄγγελος σατανᾶ<sup>213</sup>) afflicts Paul:

to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me [δίδωμι] in the flesh [σάρξ], a messenger of Satan [ἄγγελος σατανᾶ] to torment me [κολαφίζω], to keep me from being too elated. Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:7-9).

Paul’s “thorn” is “torment” at the hand of a “messenger of Satan”.<sup>214</sup> His σάρξ—physical body in this context—is afflicted, keeping Paul “weak” (ἀσθενής).<sup>215</sup> The purpose of this affliction is to affect his character: to prevent him “from being too elated [ὑπεραίρομαι]”.<sup>216</sup> As such, the work of this Satanic angel maintains a positive character in Paul. Thornton notes the jarring nature of this conclusion,<sup>217</sup> and argues in response that Satan and his angels work here (as in 1 Corinthians 5:5 and 1 Timothy 1:20) as God’s agent. However, this assumes that Satan is aware that the punishment he inflicts will actually affect a positive outcome.<sup>218</sup> Instead, it is more likely that Satan is simply acting in line with his malevolent nature. However, for Paul, God’s grace is able “in Christ” to “always...[lead] us in triumphal procession” (2 Corinthians 2:14).

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<sup>213</sup> Cf. Matthew 25:41: τῷ διαβόλῳ καὶ τοῖς ἀγγέλοις αὐτοῦ.

<sup>214</sup> Cf. Acts 12:21-23 in which Herod dies at the hand of a “messenger of the Lord [ἄγγελος κυρίου]”. Again, in 1 Corinthians 10:10, Paul speaks of an angel (named ὀλοθρευτής) who destroys (ἀπώλεια). Cf. Exodus 12:23 (LXX).

<sup>215</sup> Cf. 2 Corinthians 10:10: ἡ παρουσία σώματος ἀσθενῆς.

<sup>216</sup> Forkman (*Limits*, 144) concludes similarly.

<sup>217</sup> “How can Satan, the abettor of pride, here be linked with the inculcation of humility?” (T. C. G. Thornton, “Satan—God’s agent for punishing”, *Expository Times* 83 [1971-1972], 151-152 at 151).

<sup>218</sup> In Luke 22:3, Satan precipitates Jesus crucifixion—without realising that he would rise again in accordance with the Scriptures (Luke 24:45), and his disciples would proclaim “repentance and forgiveness of sins” “in his name” (Luke 24:47).



In the context of a discussion of verse 5, Thiselton concedes that “[t]he agency of Satan admittedly is associated with illness and death in various strands of Judaism, traces of which remain in the NT”.<sup>219</sup> However, he seeks to dampen this conclusion by arguing that:

this is by no means an essential feature of this agency, nor perhaps a systematic or a central one. Paul refers relatively seldom to the agency of Satan...Some references in Paul have more to do with deception, or with accusation, or the crushing of pride, than with notions of “curse” or “death.”<sup>220</sup>

However, contrary to Thiselton, Satan’s role in effecting “illness and death” does not need to be an “essential”, a “systematic”, nor a “central” feature of his agency in Pauline thought, in order for this understanding of Satan’s role (which Thiselton has already conceded) to be in evidence in 1 Corinthians 5.

Due to Satan’s role as a malevolent power who causes harm, παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ can justifiably be understood as an *implicit* curse. In the following discussion of εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός, we will argue that Paul makes this *implicit* curse—*explicit*: the errant Corinthian is handed over to Satan’s authority for the destruction of the flesh.

#### 3.4.4 Sin, Physical Suffering, and ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός

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<sup>219</sup> Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 398. In support of this conclusion, Thiselton cites: Job 2:5, 6; *Jubilees* 11:11, 12; 48:2, 3, 49; *Testament of Benjamin* 3:3; 1QS 4:14; CD 2:6; 4:13; Strack-Billerbeck, 1:144-49, 4:501-35; Luke 13:11, 16; 2 Corinthians 12:7.

Foerster notes that in “[l]ater Judaism, apart from its equation of Satan with the angel of death, occasionally stated that Satan and his hosts can harm and even kill men...Nor is it unheard of in later Judaism for the angel of destruction to execute the judgment of God” (W. Foerster, “σατανᾶς”, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 7.151-163 at 162).

<sup>220</sup> Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 398. Thiselton notes the following Pauline references to Satanic agency: Romans 16:20; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 7:5; 2 Corinthians 2:11; 11:14; 12:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:18; 2 Thessalonians 2:9, which he compares with 1 Timothy 1:20; 5:15.

you are to hand this man over to Satan εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός (verse 5)

In part one (and in particular, part 1.2.3), we noted the contentious nature of εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός. Whilst the translation of ὄλεθρος as “destruction” in this context is unremarkable, its interpretation is a matter of deliberation. Does it denote physical death, or a form of physical suffering that stops short of the termination of life?<sup>221</sup> Such a position depends upon one’s understand of σάρξ, the translation and interpretation of which is disputed.

Whereas some render σάρξ as “flesh”,<sup>222</sup> others translate this term “body”;<sup>223</sup> “natural life”;<sup>224</sup> “sinful nature”;<sup>225</sup> “sensual body”.<sup>226</sup> Whilst, in the history of interpretation, many exegetes have understood σάρξ as signalling the physical body that is to be destroyed (not least, those scholars responsible for the *Revised English Bible*), for an increasing number of exegetes (cf. part 1.2.3) εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός denotes the

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<sup>221</sup> Despite stating that death is the “most natural understanding of the word ‘destruction’ [ὄλεθρος]” (Fee, *Corinthians*, 210), Fee initially resists this meaning on the basis that “the punishment [of death] does not fit the ‘crime.’” (Fee, *Corinthians*, 210). However, this liberal sentiment is hardly convincing. There are many “crimes” or vices for which it is hard to see the appropriateness of such a punishment: for example, consider “drunkenness” which appears in Paul’s vice list in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (at verse 10). One could argue that Paul is more severe in his treatment of ‘drunkards’ than he is of the errant Corinthian, for whereas the incestuous man’s salvation is assured, ‘drunkards’ will not “inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:10). However, most ancients (including Paul [cf. 1 Corinthians 5:1]) and moderns alike recoil at sexual relations between family members, some to such an extent that the death penalty may seem ‘appropriate’ and justifiable. Whilst not illustrative of Paul’s thought, we must also consider the fact that the author of Acts thought it appropriate for financial impropriety to incur death (Acts 5:1-11).

<sup>222</sup> Cf. *RSV*; *New American Bible*; “you are to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh” (verse 5: *NRSV*).

<sup>223</sup> Cf. “you are to hand this man over to Satan for his body to be destroyed (verse 5: *Good News Bible*)”; “this man is to be consigned to Satan for the destruction of the body” (verse 5: *New English Bible*).

<sup>224</sup> *New Jerusalem Bible*.

<sup>225</sup> *New International Version*.

<sup>226</sup> *Jerusalem Bible*.



man's sinful nature (in a generic sense, or a specific aspect of that sinful nature. For example, his "sensual body"<sup>227</sup>) that is to be destroyed.<sup>228</sup>

For example, Thiselton translates ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός as "destruction of the fleshly".<sup>229</sup> He concludes by citing South: "The 'flesh' to be destroyed is thus not his physical body".<sup>230</sup> Whilst detailed studies of the sense of σάρξ have been conducted, the following observation is arresting: those scholars who advocate a curse interpretation of verse 5 interpret σάρξ in terms of man's physical body, whilst proponents of an exclusion-only reading maintain that σάρξ means sinful nature (in a generic or specific sense).

In the light of this observation, we will demonstrate that σάρξ is a flexible term within Pauline usage. It can mean both physical body (as advocates of the curse interpretation claim) and sinful nature (as scholars urging an exclusion-only reading suggest). Thus, it is from within the wider context of verse 5 that we must determine the function of σάρξ in this setting. Through this conclusion, the *crux interpretum* of verse 5 becomes apparent: one's reading of παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ directly impacts upon one's rendering of ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός (and, furthermore, ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῇ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου).

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<sup>227</sup> *Jerusalem Bible*.

<sup>228</sup> Some advocates of this exclusion-only reading also allow for physical suffering as a means by which the sinful nature is destroyed. However, such a reading is not essential, and many interpreters omit any discussion of physical suffering.

<sup>229</sup> Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 384.

<sup>230</sup> Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 397 quoting South, *Disciplinary*, 43 (Thiselton notes further South's argument in pages 44-71). Thiselton conducted a fuller presentation of this argument some 27 years earlier in his 1973: A. C. Thiselton, "ΣΑΡΞ".

If one decides that παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ constitutes a curse, then it is likely one will interpret σὰρξ in terms of the man's physical body—for, in the ancient world, curses inflict malevolent suffering (including physical suffering); they do not destroy a human's sinful nature. Alternatively, if, like South, one concludes that παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ is a metaphor for exclusion, then one has the difficulty of explaining how exclusion can lead to the destruction of the human body.

Of course, most exegetes commitment to an exclusionary reading of παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ means that they interpret σὰρξ in a non-corporeal manner. However, this reading is problematic for one has to demonstrate how the errant Corinthian's sinful nature can be destroyed by being excluded from the church into Satan's sphere—in which sin abounds.<sup>231</sup> If, like South, the possibility of re-admittance is foreseen,<sup>232</sup> it is then impossible for σὰρξ to denote the physical body, for through physical death the possibility of re-admittance to the community is extinguished.

It is our contention that παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ is best understood as a curse. We have seen that Satan, to whom the errant Corinthian is handed over, is a malevolent power who is responsible for causing physical suffering. In the proceeding discussion, in line with our curse reading, we will argue that that σὰρξ denotes the man's physical body in this context. Furthermore, we will explore other instances in which physical suffering is anticipated: in the account of destruction of the temple in 1

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<sup>231</sup> Some argue that separation from the community leads to repentance. However, such a notion requires considerable imagination.

<sup>232</sup> Cf. also Fee (*Corinthians*, 212):

Finally, it is out of character with Paul's theology as we meet it elsewhere that one who sins within the Christian community should be so punished in the present age that he lies beyond the redemptive, restorative love of that community. Paul in fact is found on the other side of things. To these same Christians who have been too harsh on a brother who needed correction (2 Cor. 2:5-11), he argues that "punishment by the majority is sufficient" and that they should now restore him.



Corinthians 3 (cf. part 3.4.4.1); the physical suffering and death of the Corinthians in the Lord's Supper (cf. part 3.4.4.2); and the account of the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 (cf. part 3.4.4.3).

For Paul, σάρξ is an elastic term (as the various discussions of this term clearly demonstrate<sup>233</sup>). As Jewett notes,<sup>234</sup> in 1 Corinthians 7:28, σάρξ has the sense of “physical body”: those who marry are to experience physical affliction (θλίψιν δὲ τῇ σαρκί) as the Eschaton approaches (verse 29);<sup>235</sup> in 1 Corinthians 9:11, τὰ σαρκικά refers not to the physical body, but to physical things—possessions.<sup>236</sup> Whereas in 1 Corinthians 6:16, σάρξ features as a synonym for σῶμα and denotes the physical body,<sup>237</sup> in Romans 7:5, Paul refers to a former way of living—ἐν τῇ σαρκί. However, now there is the “new life of the Spirit” (verse 6). Furthermore, Paul also employs σάρξ in conjunction with αἶμα as a synonym for the human body.<sup>238</sup> As we argued in the previous part (3.4.3), Paul's thorn in the σάρξ was also a bodily affliction. Thus, in

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<sup>233</sup> Cf. E. Schweizer, “σάρξ”, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 7. 98-151 at 125-135; A. Sand, “σάρξ”, H. Balz and G. Schneider (eds), *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1993), 3.230-233.

<sup>234</sup> R. Jewett, *Paul's Anthropological Terms: A Study of their Use in Conflict Settings* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 125.

<sup>235</sup> Likewise, cf. 2 Corinthians 12:7, in which Harris (M. J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (The New International Greek Testament Commentary; I. H. Marshall and D. A. Hagner (eds); Grand Rapids, Milton Keynes: W. B. Eerdmans/Paternoster, 2005), 854) comments that:

If σάρξ here refers to the corrupt human nature, τῇ σαρκί will be a dative of disadvantage, “for the (inconvenience of the) flesh,” that is, to curb evil desires, to prevent “the lower nature” from becoming aggressive. But more probably this dative is locative and σάρξ denotes the physical body, “in the flesh”, the reference may be to the physical body, presumably then with the dative being classified as a dative of disadvantage or of respect. In addition, the article with σαρκί may be possessive: “in my flesh” (NIV, REB) or “to pierce my flesh” (TCNT). The commonest rendering, “a thorn in the flesh,” may be safely followed.

Cf. the similar use of σάρξ as physical body in 1 Corinthians 15:39, 50; 1 Peter 4:1.

<sup>236</sup> So, NRSV: “is it too much if we reap your material benefits” (1 Corinthians 9:11).

<sup>237</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:38-39; Colossians 1:22.

<sup>238</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:50; Galatians 1:16; Ephesians 6:12.

this light it is clear that σάρξ can denote the physical body. In our following discussion, we will suggest strong reasons for understanding it as such in verse 5.

### 3.4.4.1 Fire, Destruction, Salvation, and Temple—1 Corinthians 3

If the work [ἔργον] is burned up [κατακαίω], the builder will suffer loss [ζημιόω]; the builder will be saved [σώζω], but only as through fire [πῦρ]. Do you not know that you are God's temple [ναός] and that God's Spirit [πνεῦμα] dwells in you? If anyone destroys [φθείρω] God's temple, God will destroy [φθείρω] that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple (1 Corinthians 3:15-17).

In the context of a discussion concerning divisions amongst the Corinthians, Paul states that those celebrities, including himself, around whom the Corinthians have been dividing are not in competition, but are “God's fellow workers [συνεργός]” (1 Corinthians 3:9). Paul and Apollos alike are διάκονοι: “servants”. The Corinthians are “God's field [γεώργιον]” (verse 9) in which both Paul (who “planted”) and Apollos (who “watered”) have laboured as servants of God (who “gives the growth”) (verses 6-9).

Having assumed an agricultural metaphor to undermine the basis of the divisions in Corinth, Paul adopts the language of construction. The Corinthians are “God's building [οἰκοδομή]” (verse 9). Paul, like a “wise master-builder [σοφὸς ἀρχιτέκτων]”, has laid the foundation,<sup>239</sup> whilst another “is building upon it” (verse 10); that “foundation” is “Jesus Christ” (verse 11). A variety of materials can be employed to build upon this fundament (the product of this constructive action constituting τὸ ἔργον [verse 12]): “gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, [and] straw” (verse 12). However, each one's “work” (ἔργον<sup>240</sup>) will be “revealed” (ἀποκαλύπτω<sup>241</sup>): “for the Day will disclose it”

<sup>239</sup> Cf. Romans 15:19-20.

<sup>240</sup> In 1 Corinthians 9:1 Paul refers to the Corinthians as τὸ ἔργον μου. Cf. 1 Corinthians 4:5.

<sup>241</sup> Kuck (D. W. Kuck, *Judgment & Community Conflict: Paul's Use of Apocalyptic Judgment*



(verse 13).<sup>242</sup> Whilst this outlines the point at which the disclosure will occur, Paul also states the means by which τὸ ἔργον is revealed—and to what end: “it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test [δοκιμάζω] what sort of work [τὸ ἔργον] each has done” (verse 13).<sup>243</sup>

Paul’s language is unmistakably metaphorical. The word “fire” (πῦρ) is part of the vocabulary of judgment, whilst ἡ ἡμέρα and ἀποκαλύπτω suggest an eschatological context for this testing.<sup>244</sup> If τὸ ἔργον which has been “built” “remains”, he will “receive a reward” (verse 14).<sup>245</sup> However, if τὸ ἔργον is “burned up, the builder will suffer loss” (verse 15).<sup>246</sup> Nevertheless, “the builder will be saved [σώζω], but only as through fire [πῦρ]” (verse 15):<sup>247</sup>

In Jewish and Christian imagery fire most often serves as the instrument of God’s punishing judgment or as a purifying agent, and there have been some who have tried to make Paul here in 1 Cor 3:12-15 speak of the purging fires of purgatory or the tormenting fire of hell. However, the verb δοκιμάζειν, followed by the possibilities of the work enduring or being consumed in vv. 14-15a, indicates that the fire serves to reveal the quality of the work so that the person can be judged for reward or loss. The fire is not said to purify or punish the persons themselves.<sup>248</sup>

Kuck’s reading of 1 Corinthians 3 is commendable. However, whilst he is right to reject notions of purgatory or hell as anachronistic, his repudiation of physical suffering

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*Language in 1 Corinthians 3:5-4:5* [Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1992], 179) notes that the subject of ἀποκαλύπτεται is unclear. Thus, either “‘the day is revealed with fire’ or as ‘the work of each is revealed by means of fire’”.

<sup>242</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 1:8; 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1:14; Romans 13:12; Philippians 1:6, 10; 2:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 4; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; Hebrews 10:25.

<sup>243</sup> Cf. Psalm 12:6; 17:3; 26:10; Proverb 27:21.

<sup>244</sup> Cf. 1 Peter 1:7.

<sup>245</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 9:17, 24-27 in which Paul also speaks of a “reward” (μισθός) and “Prize” (βραβεῖον) in the context of an agon. Cf. Philippians 3:14.

<sup>246</sup> Literally, “he shall suffer loss [ζημιόω]” (1 Corinthians 3:15).

<sup>247</sup> Garland (*1 Corinthians*, 121) notes the use of similar language (“fire”, “work”, and “test”) to Paul’s account in *Testament of Abraham*, 13:11-14. However, in contrast to the *Testament of Abraham*, 1 Corinthians 3 does not translate one whose work is judged to the place of sinners.

<sup>248</sup> Kuck, *Judgment*, 180-181.

is too emphatic. Likewise, Thiselton's and Fee's treatment of Paul's perplexing caveat οὕτως δὲ ὥς διὰ πυρός as "saved by the skin of one's teeth" is not instantly persuasive.<sup>249</sup>

A critical issue concerns what, in practice, constitutes a man's "work". Garland remarks in passing that a verbal link exists between 1 Corinthians 3 and 5, namely the presence of τὸ ἔργον in 1 Corinthians 5:2 where Paul describes the errant Corinthian's act of πορνεία as τὸ ἔργον.<sup>250</sup> In the light of 1 Corinthians 3, the Corinthian πόρνος (in chapter 5) had built a "work" upon the foundation that was destined to be "burned up",<sup>251</sup> even though he would be "saved" (cf. 3:15 and 5:5).<sup>252</sup> These words are reminiscent of 1 Corinthians 5:5 in which the errant Corinthian is "saved [σώζω] in the day [ἡ ἡμέρα] of the Lord", even though his σὰρξ is to be destroyed (ὀλεθρος)—through exclusion, (and as we are arguing) physical suffering, and possibly even death. As such, whilst salvation is assured in 1 Corinthians 3, physical suffering as a result of the destruction of the "work" cannot be ruled out.<sup>253</sup> This understanding would explain Paul's enigmatic phrase οὕτως δὲ ὥς διὰ πυρός.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 315 quoting Fee, *Corinthians*, 144 (whom he endorses).

<sup>250</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 117 n. 16. As we have seen, Garland is an advocate of an exclusion-only reading of verse 5 (cf. part 1.2.3.5). Cf. 1 Corinthians 5:3: κατεργάζομαι.

<sup>251</sup> It is possible that the errant Corinthian is a prominent member of the church: a builder or Corinthian leader (whom Paul has in view here). This would go some way towards explaining the Corinthians' "arrogance" (5:2) and also that Paul thought it unnecessary to name the errant Corinthian.

<sup>252</sup> Barrett (*Corinthians*, 127) compares verse 5 with 1 Corinthians 3:15: "The thought may be simply that of iii. 15: the man's essential self will be saved with the loss not only of his work but of his flesh."

<sup>253</sup> Cf. 1 Peter 1:6-7 in which resonates with this passage: "In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while *you have had to suffer various trials*, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than *gold* that, though perishable, is *tested by fire*—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."

<sup>254</sup> The use of ὥς highlights the metaphorical nature of Paul's words here. However, the language of fire is a metaphorical way of expressing judgment. It does not preclude that judgment taking the form of physical punishment.



Having discussed the fiery destruction of a builder's "work", Paul focuses upon the destruction (φθείρω) of God's temple (verses 16-17)—the Corinthians as a corporate building:<sup>255</sup>

Do you not know that you are God's temple [ναός] and that God's Spirit dwells in you [ἐν ὑμῖν]? If any one destroys [φθείρω] God's temple [ναός], God will destroy [φθείρω] him. For God's temple [ναός] is holy, and that temple [ναός] you are [ἐστε ὑμεῖς] (verses 16-17).

The holiness motif is inescapable here. To defile the community in which God's Spirit resides, is to invite destruction—for "God's temple is holy" and it must not be defiled. Barrett relates this "holiness motif" to 1 Corinthians 5: "The sinner must be removed because holiness and unholiness cannot co-exist, 'a little leaven leavens the whole lump'" (1 Corinthians 5:6).<sup>256</sup>

However, it is Rosner who more fully argues for a connection between 1 Corinthians 3 and 5.<sup>257</sup> In particular, he suggests that the errant Corinthian is to be excluded, "in order to restore the holiness of God's temple, the church."<sup>258</sup> Holiness, he argues, "is associated with community exclusion in the Pentateuch through two terms, חרם and כרת, which arguably have links with 1 Corinthians 5:5."<sup>259</sup> Rosner's assessment of חרם chimes with our own study of this term (in part 3.4.2.3), where we concluded that this curse language denotes that which has been "devoted to God for destruction", and must therefore be excluded as that which is accursed and awaiting devastation:

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<sup>255</sup> Cf. 2 Corinthians 6:16.

<sup>256</sup> Rosner, *Paul*, 80.

<sup>257</sup> Cf. Rosner, "Temple", 137-145.

<sup>258</sup> Cf. Rosner, "Temple", 137-145 at 137. Cf. Bruce's conclusion that Luke's message to the fearful ἐκκλησία in the account of Ananias and Sapphira (which we will consider in part 3.4.4.3) was that "the presence of the Holy Spirit in the community calls for practical holiness on the part of the members" (Bruce, *Acts*, 165).

<sup>259</sup> Rosner, "Temple", 137-145 at 138. In part 3.4.2.3, we also argued that Paul's phrase παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ and ἀνάθεμα (MT: חרם) are interrelated concepts.

Contamination is also a common theme; whoever takes possession of a devoted thing must himself be devoted, along with his house and even town. Thus in the holiness motif, a person or thing must be removed because of the holiness of God who has sanctified the community.<sup>260</sup>

Whoever defiles God's temple will be destroyed (φθείρω). Likewise, the Corinthian offender is to be destroyed (ὄλεθρος: verse 5). The difference in terminology here is inconsequential, for destruction is denoted by both terms.<sup>261</sup> Within Pauline thought, human sin can lead to physical destruction.

#### 3.4.4.2 The Lord's Supper—1 Corinthians 11:17-34

For all who eat and drink without discerning the body [διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα], eat and drink judgment [κρίμα] against themselves. For this reason many of you are weak [ἀσθενής] and ill [ἄρρωστος], and some have died [κοιμάω]. But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged [κρίνω] by the Lord, we are disciplined [παιδεύω] so that we may not be condemned [κατακρίνω] along with the world (1 Corinthians 11:29-32).

Through a consideration of the Corinthians' abuse of the Lord's Supper, we will demonstrate a link in Paul's thought between sin and (in response to that sin) discipline in the form of physical suffering, and even death.<sup>262</sup> Whereas in verse 5, the errant Corinthian's sin of πορνεία precipitated judgment in the form of a curse that wrought physical destruction (ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός); in this instance, we will show that abuse of the Lord's Supper leads to similarly malevolent physical consequences.

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<sup>260</sup> Rosner, "Temple", 137-145 at 138.

<sup>261</sup> Paul's temple language also features in 1 Corinthians 6. However, in this context, the term ναὸς indicates an individual, and not a corporate, use. Concerning 1 Corinthians 3, we have argued that those who defile (in a general sense) the holiness of the Corinthian community will be destroyed. In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul is more specific: the body is not for sexual immorality (πορνεία). To sin in such a manner is to sin "against the body [σῶμα] itself" (verse 18)—the body being the temple in which the Holy Spirit dwells (verse 19).

<sup>262</sup> In this context, Paul refers to death as κοιμάω: "sleep".



In 1 Corinthians 11:17-22, Paul reprimands the Corinthians concerning their practice of the Lord's Supper. Firstly, the Apostle has heard of divisions among them (verse 18),<sup>263</sup> which are specifically manifest in their practice of the Lord's Supper:

When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper. For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? (verses 20-22).

For Theissen, social conflict is at the crux of the dispute, making it necessary to unite both social and theological factors.<sup>264</sup> Specifically, he argues that the Corinthian Lord's Supper is the forum for a group conflict between rich and poor Christians. Rich Christians are eating by themselves before the beginning of the Lord's Supper. Furthermore, Theissen argues that they are eating more food than the poor during the Eucharist:

So it may be that with the words of institution, not all the food on hand was shared with the congregation, but a certain portion was claimed as "private".<sup>265</sup>

The rich also have a different quality of meal, unrestricted to bread and wine alone. However, no provision was made in the words of institution for the sharing of this additional private meal with the wider Corinthian body. In response to this abuse of the Lord's Supper, Paul reiterates the tradition (verses 23-26) he had "received from the Lord" (παρέλαβον ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου) which he "handed over" to them (παρέδωκα ὑμῖν) (v. 23):

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<sup>263</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 1:10; 12:25. Curiously, Paul adds that "Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will become clear who among you are genuine" (1 Corinthians 11:19). Cf. Fee (*Corinthians*, 537-539) for a discussion of verse 19.

<sup>264</sup> G. Theissen, "Social Integration and Sacramental Activity: An Analysis of 1 Cor. 11.17-34" in *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity* (ed. and trans. J. H. Schütz; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990), 145-174 at 146.

<sup>265</sup> Theissen, "Social", 145-174 at 153.

the focus of Paul's concern is on this meal as a means of proclaiming Christ's death, a point the Corinthians' action is obviously bypassing.

So then, Paul states: "whoever...eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy [ἀναξίως] manner"—that is in the inequitable, socially divisive, manner in which the Corinthians have been conducting the Lord's Supper—<sup>266</sup> will be "guilty [ἔνοχος<sup>267</sup>] of the body and blood of the Lord" (verse 27): "guilty" of "sinning against the Lord"; or "held liable for his [the Lord's] death".<sup>268</sup> Fee,<sup>269</sup> Barrett,<sup>270</sup> and Conzelmann favour the latter interpretation:<sup>271</sup>

To "profane" the meal as they are doing is to place themselves under the same liability as those responsible for that death in the first place. Thus, to be "guilty of his body and blood" means to be "liable for his death."<sup>272</sup>

To avoid being pronounced "guilty", the Corinthians must "examine" (δοκιμάζω<sup>273</sup>) themselves before partaking of "the body and blood" (verse 28):<sup>274</sup> in the context (verses 17-26), they must reflect upon their behaviour and act appropriately towards their fellow Corinthian brothers. A failure to "distinguish" (μὴ διακρίνων<sup>275</sup>) the body

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<sup>266</sup> Fee, *Corinthians*, 560.

<sup>267</sup> Cf. Matthew 5:21-22; 26:66; Mark 3:29; 14:26; Hebrews 2:15; James 2:10.

<sup>268</sup> Fee, *Corinthians*, 560.

<sup>269</sup> Fee, *Corinthians*, 560-561.

<sup>270</sup> Barrett, *Corinthians*, 273.

<sup>271</sup> Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 202.

<sup>272</sup> Fee, *Corinthians*, 561.

<sup>273</sup> Luke 14:19; Romans 2:18; 12:2; 14:22; 1 Corinthians 16:3; 2 Corinthians 8:22; Philippians 1:10; Hebrews 3:9; 1 Peter 1:7.

<sup>274</sup> Horsley (R. A. Horsley, *1 Corinthians* [Abingdon New Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998], 162), echoing the sentiment of many exegetes, notes that:

By translating "answerable for the body and blood" in verse 27, the *NRSV* has restored the sense of "guilty of" or "liable for," thus moving the focus back to the social-political sphere from the individualistic introspection or obsession with profanation of the sacred to which this passage had long been bound.

<sup>275</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 4:7; 6:5; 14:29.



puts them in danger of judgment (κρίμα)—which results in physical suffering and mortal peril itself:

For this reason many of you are weak [ἀσθενής] and ill [ἄρρωστος], and some have died [κοιμάω]...If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for you condemnation [κρίμα] (vv. 30, 34).

The sinful misconduct surrounding the Lord's Supper is physically dangerous.<sup>276</sup> Judgment, in the form of physical suffering,<sup>277</sup> has afflicted the Corinthians in varying degrees of severity:<sup>278</sup> they have suffered physical "weakness", or "infirmity" (ἀσθενής<sup>279</sup>), "illness" (ἄρρωστος<sup>280</sup>), and "death" (κοιμάω<sup>281</sup>). Paul directly relates this physical suffering to the Corinthians' abuse of the Lord's Supper ("Therefore" [διὰ: verse 30]).<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Whilst our reading does not suggest any numinous quality to the elements of the Lord's Supper, the primacy of the social context does not necessarily preclude such a reading. Paul's judgment is of the social divisions in the context of the Lord's Supper which nullifies the Lord's Supper (verses 20-22).

<sup>277</sup> *Contra*. S. Schneider ("Glaubensmängel in Korinth': Eine neue Deutung der 'Schwachen, Kranken, Schlafenden' in 1 Kor 11,30", *Filologia Neotestamentaria*, 9 [1996], 3-19), ἀσθενής, ἄρρωστος, and κοιμάω should not be understood metaphorically in this context. As Garland (*1 Corinthians*, 553) rightly notes:

For his [Paul's] argument to have force as a threat, one would assume that the readers could readily identify those who were sick or have died as guilty of despising and humiliating their brothers and sisters at the Lord's Supper.

<sup>278</sup> It is unclear if the physical suffering occurs randomly, or if certain individuals are specifically targeted. Moreover, such thoughts are unlikely to have occurred to Paul, as he viewed the Corinthians as a corporate "body", and not primarily as a collection of individuals.

<sup>279</sup> Cf. Matthew 25:39, 43-44; 26:41; Mark 14:38; 2 Corinthians 10:10; 1 Peter 3:7.

<sup>280</sup> Cf. Matthew 14:14; Mark 6:5, 13; 16:18.

<sup>281</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:6, 18, 20, 51; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-15.

<sup>282</sup> Robertson and Plummer (*First Epistle*, 253) mistakenly seek to rationalise the judgment, thus: "It is possible that the excess in drinking may have led in some cases to illness". Likewise, Thiselton (*First Epistle*, 894) maintains that,

Since he [Paul] earlier actually mentions *drunkenness* (11:21), it is just conceivable that a serious decline in health could result causally from excess in gluttony and drink which brought its own judgment, especially if a wealthy host saw an opportunity to masquerade sheer excess under the cloak of 'doing the Lord's work' by hosting frequent 'Suppers of the Lord.'



If the Corinthians had judged themselves, they would have escaped judgment (verse 31). However, they have been “judged by the Lord” (v. 32) in the form of physical suffering; they have been “disciplined”, or “nurtured as children” (παιδεύω).<sup>283</sup> Whilst the Lord’s “discipline” involves physical suffering—to the point of death, it serves to prevent the Corinthians from being “condemned [κατακρίνω] along with the world” (v. 32):

The second sentence (v. 32) responds to the real situation. They are in fact presently being “judged by the Lord” (in the way mentioned in v. 30); but this sentence makes it clear that by “judgment” Paul does not mean that the sick or dead are threatened with eternal loss. Rather, such “judgment” is to be understood as divine “discipline” in which a loving God is correcting his children. The purpose of such discipline is “so that we will not be condemned with the world,” when brought to final judgment being implied.<sup>284</sup>

It is clear that discipline in response to sin can take the form of physical (not figurative) suffering and even death.<sup>285</sup> Moreover, the purpose of such discipline is salvific in the sense that it prevents one from being “condemned with the world” (verse 32).<sup>286</sup> There

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<sup>283</sup> This same verb features in 1 Timothy 1:20 in which Hymenaeus and Alexander are delivered to Satan to be ἵνα παιδευθῶσιν μὴ βλασφημεῖν. We can now see that physical suffering is not precluded by the use of παιδεύω. Rather, in this extended discussion concerning the Lord’s Supper, Paul links παιδεύω with physical suffering. Cf. 2 Corinthians 6:9; Hebrews 12:6-7, 10-11; Revelation 3:19.

The link between discipline and physical suffering is unsurprising, for the rejection of corporal punishment as a form of discipline is a modern, mainly Western, notion. Furthermore, the dislocation of crime from physical punishment is also a relatively modern, localised, notion—for Saudi Arabia employs the “lash”, and a number of States in the U.S.A. employ the death penalty.

<sup>284</sup> Fee, *Corinthians*, 566. Similarly, cf. Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, 162-163.

<sup>285</sup> Cf. Luke 13:1-5 in which a connection is made between sin and suffering (cf. also Luke 5:18-24; John 9:2-3). 1 John 5:17 which demonstrates that it is possible for sin to lead to death.

<sup>286</sup> Strikingly, this conclusion refutes Fee’s argument that death cannot be envisaged in 1 Corinthians 5:5, because death cannot be “remedial”: “It is especially difficult to see how an expected result of death can be understood as remedial” (Fee, *Corinthians*, 210). However, as we have seen, in 1 Corinthians 11, physical suffering and death feature *specifically* in order to prevent the Corinthians from being condemned—it is remedial.

Like other exegetes, a concern for contemporary ecclesiology has arguably affected Fee’s assessment of 1 Corinthians 5, making a conclusion in favour of physical suffering and death more difficult to maintain. For example, he assumes the primacy of the early church (which he reconstructs, if cautiously) for contemporary Christian practice (note his value judgment concerning the contemporary church in the light of his reconstruction of the early church), and evinces a high pneumatology in line with his Pentecostal tradition:

the ultimate reason for such discipline is remedial, not judgmental...Probably discipline of this kind should be reserved for such “contaminating” sins...Perhaps it should be



is a clear conceptual congruence here between verse 32 and 1 Corinthians 5:5: both contexts concern judgment for sin in which physical suffering ensues; both judgments are disciplinary in nature (as such, salvation is assured).<sup>287</sup>

A number of scholars have viewed the punishment of the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 11:30, like 1 Corinthians 5, as a curse.<sup>288</sup> For example, Hays links God's judgment in this passage to "the theology of Deuteronomy, which proclaims that curses and misfortunes will fall upon Israel if they disregard the covenant that God has made with them."<sup>289</sup> More explicitly, Pesce<sup>290</sup> considers this passage in the light of the ordeal and covenant breaking.<sup>291</sup> However, even more pertinent is Paul's précis of Israelite history in relation to idolatry:

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added that if one were to be so disciplined in our day, too often the person could "take it or leave it" as far as the church is concerned—and that probably says more about the condition of the church itself than about the person who is dissociated. Maybe the most significant thing we can learn from such a text is how far many of us are removed from a view of the church in which the dynamic of the Spirit was so real that exclusion could be a genuinely redemptive action (Fee, *Corinthians*, 214).

Cf. also Garland who, like Fee and May, assumes the applicability of verse 5 for contemporary Christian practice:

Since Paul considers church discipline to be so important, and since it is little practiced in contemporary churches to good effect, it may be beneficial to attempt to distil the theological relevance of what he says in these verses...In many cultures, what consenting adults do in private is nobody's business. If they are Christians, however, it is very much the business of the church when it brings shame upon the believing community (Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 180).

It is worth recalling that the Inquisition conceived of itself in similarly redemptive terms on the basis of 1 Corinthians 5:5 (cf. part 1.1). Perhaps there are more pressing, more "significant thing[s] we can learn" from this passage concerning authority, politics, group boundaries, violence, and divinely sanctioned acts. In our general conclusion, we draw some conclusions concerning the hermeneutical approach of scholars, such as Fee.

<sup>287</sup> Cf. part 3.4.5 for a discussion of salvation in relation to 1 Corinthians 5:5.

<sup>288</sup> Later Christians appropriated the language of the Lord's Supper in cursing: "[The body] and blood of Jesus Christ, strike Maria" (Meyer and Smith, *Ancient*, 193); and also in protective amulets: "The body and the blood of Christ spare your servant who wears this amulet" (Meyer and Smith, *Ancient*, 35).

<sup>289</sup> Hays, *First Corinthians*, 205-206.

<sup>290</sup> M. Pesce, "Mangiare e bere il proprio giudizio. Una concezione culturale comune a 1 Cor e a Sota?" *Revista biblica* 38 (1990), 495-513, whose argument is recounted by Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 894-895.

<sup>291</sup> Cf. Part 2.1.3.



and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down [καταστρώννυμι] in the wilderness (1 Corinthians 10:3-5).

In the context of Tanakh, the spiritual food was manna,<sup>292</sup> and the water the LORD miraculously supplied through Moses.<sup>293</sup> However, the conceptual relationship between food, drink, judgment, and physical death (καταστρώννυμι) is likely to have remained influential in Paul's thought concerning the Lord's Supper in the next chapter. Moreover, Paul relates this discussion of idolatry (in verses 1-13), to the wider issue of food offered to idols (chapters 8-10) and the Lord's Supper (verses 14-22).

#### 3.4.4.3 Ananias and Sapphira: Acts 5:1-11

Now when Ananias heard these words, he fell down [πίπτω] and died [ἐκψύχω]. And great fear seized all who heard of it (Acts 5:5).

The account of Ananias and his wife Sapphira concerns a property transaction (verse 1).<sup>294</sup> In collusion with his wife, Ananias withholds a portion of the profit from Peter (verse 2).<sup>295</sup> Peter responds to Ananias' action by declaring that Satan had "filled...[his] heart" and caused him to "lie to the Holy Spirit". Satan's precise role in this action is disputed. However, Barrett is most likely right when he states that:

In itself the verb ἐπλήρωσεν could mean that Satan filled Ananias's heart *with something*—that is, with the evil intention to retain part of his money for his own use while giving the impression that he had contributed the whole. But as Satan *entered into* Judas Iscariot so probably the thought here is that he had entered into and filled Ananias's heart, thus taking control of his actions (his heart being the thinking, willing agent that directed them).<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> Exodus 16:4, 14-18.

<sup>293</sup> Exodus 17:1-7; Numbers 20:7-13.

<sup>294</sup> This account stands in immediate contrast to Barnabas' property sale (cf. Acts 4:36-37).

<sup>295</sup> Williams (D. J. Williams, *Acts: New International Biblical Commentary* [Peabody, Hendrickson: 1990], 96) argues plausibly that the concept of חרם (cf. part 3.4.2.3) is alluded to by Luke due to the presence of νοσφίζω in the account of Achan's withholding of some of Jericho's possessions which has been devoted (חרם: LXX, ἀνάθεμα) to Yahweh (Joshua 7:1. Cf. Titus 2:10). If so, Ananias and Sapphira are guilty of withholding that which has been devoted to God.

<sup>296</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (2 vols;



Regardless of the actual nature of the crime (which is not directly relevant to us), Peter maintains that Ananias, with Satanic involvement, withheld some money and lied—against the Holy Spirit (verse 3), and God (verse 4).<sup>297</sup> This sin is punished with Ananias' death, which occurs when he hears Peter's "words" (verse 5).<sup>298</sup>

A similar fate to Ananias awaits Sapphira, who having "tested" (πειράζω) the "Spirit of the Lord" is condemned (verse 9)—if, somewhat, lyrically: "Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out" (verse 10):

Immediately she fell down [πίπτω<sup>299</sup>] at his feet and died [ἐκψύχω<sup>300</sup>]. When the young men came in they found her dead [νεκρός], so they carried her out and buried her beside her husband (verse 10).

Haenchen considers this account in the light of 1 Corinthians 5:5, and concludes that it "does not offer an exact parallel, for Ananias and his wife are not killed in order that their πνεῦμα may be saved in the Last Judgment!"<sup>301</sup> Furthermore, contrary to Lüdemann,<sup>302</sup> South is right to note that the role of Satan is materially different in both

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Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 1.266.

<sup>297</sup> Bruce (F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* [3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; Grand Rapids, W. B. Eerdmans: 1990], 163.) rightly explains that "It was to God that the lie was told because it was to God that the gift was offered."

<sup>298</sup> Cf. 1QS 6:24-25: "And these are the regulations by which they shall judge in an examination of the Community depending on the case. If one is found among them who has lied knowingly concerning possessions, he shall be excluded from the pure food of the Many for a year and they shall withhold a quarter of his bread". In this light, the Petrine church is presented in a more severe manner (concerning disciplinary matters) than other contemporaneous groups.

<sup>299</sup> The use of πίπτω here is reminiscent of Paul's use of the term in 1 Corinthians 10:8, in which a link between πορνεία and death is clear: "We must not indulge in sexual immorality [πορνεύω] as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell [πίπτω] in a single day."

<sup>300</sup> Cf. Acts 12:23.

<sup>301</sup> E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 239.

<sup>302</sup> G. Lüdemann, *Early Christianity according to the Traditions in Acts: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1989), 65.

passages.<sup>303</sup> Whilst Haenchen's assessment is correct, the more general link between the idea of judgment and death is clear. Lüdemann has argued that this passage constitutes a Petrine curse,<sup>304</sup> reminiscent of 1 Corinthians 5:

Certainly the tradition here, in contrast to I Cor.5, does not reflect the future fate of the sinner, and we are not explicitly told that Peter handed him over to Satan. But the context of the idea is the same. A 'holy' man, Peter or Paul, executes sacred law on a sinner which results in his death. At the same time this implies that Peter is an element of the tradition. The tradition probably came into being in the Jerusalem community, at its earliest period, when Peter was its leader. Because of the parallel to I Cor.5 an analogous event seems to underlie this as a historical nucleus. A member of the community had offended against sacred law and was therefore cursed and expelled by the head of the community...Whether he died, though, is uncertain...But it is certain that according to sacred law he should have died.<sup>305</sup>

However, there is no indication of expulsion in Acts 5:1-11, neither does the formal language of cursing feature, unlike in 1 Corinthians 5. There is a possible indication of a curse in Acts 5:5, insofar as Ananias' death occurs when he hears Peter's "words". Whilst this is far from conclusive, the account of Sapphira's death is more suggestive of a curse. Consider again Peter's words: "Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out" (verse 9). In response to these words, Sapphira falls down dead. Whilst there are hints of a curse in this passage, the link between certain types of sin and its judgment in the form of physical death is clear.

In this part (3.4.4), we have sought to explain the more detailed nature of the curse (as denoted by εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός) by arguing that physical suffering, and possibly even death, is envisaged. To this end, we have argued that ὄλεθρος implies physical "destruction", for σάρξ denotes the man's physical body in this context. More broadly, we have demonstrated a connection between sin, and physical suffering (including

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<sup>303</sup> South, *Disciplinary*, 47.

<sup>304</sup> Cf. the following Petrine curse: "May your silver perish with you" (Acts 8:20). Other curses are attested in Acts. For example, in Acts 13:10-11 Paul curses a magician named Elymas with temporary blindness.

<sup>305</sup> Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 65-66.



death) as a consequence of sin, in biblical literature within which the errant Corinthian's physical ὄλεθρος can be understood.

### 3.4.5 Reconfiguring Cursing?—The Pauline Curse that Saves

so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord (verse 5: *NRSV*)

ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῇ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου

Salvation (σώζω) is the purpose of the curse (as denoted by παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός) and exclusion Paul envisages in 1 Corinthians 5.<sup>306</sup> This is startling, for such a conception of cursing was not in evidence in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman curse material we considered in part two. Moreover, we should not be surprised by its absence; for this conception of cursing is oxymoronic: cursing causes destruction, not salvation. Before we prematurely grapple with this conundrum, there are issues that need to be addressed.

Firstly, contrary to the *NRSV* (verse 5, cited above),<sup>307</sup> Paul wrote ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῇ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου in verse 5. It is “*the* spirit”, not “*his* spirit” (*NRSV*) that is to be “saved”. As such, we must consider the meaning of τὸ πνεῦμα in this context. Secondly, what is meant by ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου which adds a temporal qualification to this phrase?

Some maintain that the Holy Spirit is envisaged by τὸ πνεῦμα in this context; others argue that the Corinthian congregation is envisaged. Finally, it is suggested that τὸ πνεῦμα refers specifically to the errant Corinthian individual. If the first two readings

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<sup>306</sup> Note the use of ἵνα.

<sup>307</sup> Cf. also Orr and Walther (*1 Corinthians*, 184) who, without comment, translate τὸ πνεῦμα as “his spirit”.

are correct, then verse 5 constitutes a traditional curse; no reconfiguration of cursing is envisioned by Paul—for the Corinthian πόρνος is not to experience salvation.

Yarbro Collins (whose interpretation of verse five we have previously critiqued [in part 1.1.8]) is an exponent of the first position. Rather than referring to the errant Corinthian, it is argued that τὸ πνεῦμα is a reference to the Holy Spirit dwelling within the congregation which/who is in danger of being “lost to the community”.<sup>308</sup> However, as many commentators have rightly noted (Fee, perhaps, most strenuously), this understanding sits awkwardly with the salvific motif in verse 5:

But such a view does violence to the soteriological aspect of the verb “saved,” which has to mean something like “be kept safe for.” The eschatological reference to “the Day of the Lord” rules out such a possibility.<sup>309</sup>

The second possibility, which considers the Corinthians collectively as τὸ πνεῦμα, is not without merit. Paul has spoken vividly about the need to maintain the purity (unleaven [ἄζυμοι] state) of the community (especially in verses 6-8) by expelling the errant Corinthian pollutant (ζύμη). However, it should be noted that this outcome can still be achieved indirectly through the salvation of the errant Corinthian: by cursing and excluding him, the sexually immoral Corinthian is saved, whilst his polluting influence is removed from the community.

This interpretation is to be preferred, for whilst the community features in this reading, it also maintains the focus upon the individual in verse 5. Furthermore, this understanding of verse 5 is supported by other passages we have considered, such as the

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<sup>308</sup> Yarbro Collins, “Function”, 251-263 at 260.

<sup>309</sup> Fee, *Corinthians*, 211 n. 77.



death of certain Corinthian individuals (1 Corinthians 11:30) so that they may not be “condemned along with the world” (1 Corinthians 11:32).

Having discounted the previous two options, we are left with the most persuasive reading: namely, that τὸ πνεῦμα refers to the sexually immoral Corinthian. The manner in which τὸ πνεῦμα refers to the man is difficult to nuance, although its sense as that part of man which survives death is required by the context. Thus, Kremer states that “πνεῦμα can...be used of a manner of existence or life force that survives death (cf. 1 Pet 3:18; 4:6; 1 Tim 3:16; also Rom 1:4...).”<sup>310</sup> Erickson suggests that τὸ πνεῦμα refers to the “human spirit”,<sup>311</sup> whilst Schweizer more specifically speaks of the man’s spirit as “the I given to him by God”.<sup>312</sup>

The inability to explain in what manner physical suffering—and especially death—could be salvific has weakened the curse interpretation.<sup>313</sup> Although Barrett does not advocate a curse reading of this passage (cf. part 1.2.1.2), his interpretation does envisages physical suffering and most likely death. The strength of his interpretation is in his willingness to grapple with the role of salvation in this reading:

Suffering at least is meant...probably death...This dreadful process is intended (ἵνα, denoting purpose) to lead to the salvation of the man’s spirit...It is not clear how the

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<sup>310</sup> J. Kremer, “πνεῦμα, ατος, τό” in H. Balz and G. Schneider (eds), *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1993), 3.117-123 at 118. Kremer tentatively suggests this sense of πνεῦμα in verse 5.

<sup>311</sup> R. J. Erickson, “Flesh”, G. F. Hawthorne and R. P. Martin (eds), *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 303-306 at 304. Interestingly, Erickson maintains a non-corporeal understanding of σάρξ in verse 5: “1 Corinthians 5:5...is distinct in that it employs *pneuma* for the human spirit; nevertheless, *sarx* there does not refer to the body” (Erickson, “Flesh”, 304).

<sup>312</sup> E. Schweizer, “πνεῦμα, πνευματικός”, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 6.332-451 at 435-436.

<sup>313</sup> Cf. South, *Disciplinary*, 60-65. Forkman (*Limits*, 144), demonstrates the difficulty some scholars have had in articulating the role of salvation in verse 5: “In some way the curse stands in the service of the blessing, and Paul can say that the curse takes place in order that the spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord.”

destruction of the physical side of man's nature can effect the salvation of the immaterial side. Suffering may indeed be remedial, but nothing in the context suggests this thought. In Judaism, death was sometimes thought of as the means of atonement for sins not dealt with by the Day of Atonement (see e.g. *Sanhedrin* vi. 2, where even the criminal about to be executed is instructed to say, May my death be an atonement for all my sins), but for Paul our atonement is not through our death, but through Christ's. The thought may be that the devil must be given his due, but can claim no more; if he has the flesh he has no right to the spirit, even of the sinner.<sup>314</sup>

Contrary to Barrett's approach, it is not necessary to understand physical suffering and death as a type of purgatorial process which results in salvation. Instead, fleshly suffering and death should be understood as a means of arresting the errant Corinthian's sinful activities (likewise, in 1 Corinthians 11). His suffering makes him too sick to continue to indulge in πορνεία with his γυνή πατρὸς.<sup>315</sup> Ultimately, death brings finality to the man's sinfulness—preventing even the possibility of sinning again in this manner. However, his salvation is anticipated by Paul in the impending eschaton—ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου.<sup>316</sup> In 1 Corinthians 3:13, Paul refers to “the day” (ἡ ἡμέρα), whilst in 1 Corinthians 1:8, he speaks of “the end” and the “day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ [Χριστοῦ]):<sup>317</sup>

The “day of the Lord” is shorthand for the revealing of Christ (1:7) and the final judgment on the last day. In his opening thanksgiving (1:8), Paul voices his prayer that Christ will strengthen them to the end, so that they may be blameless “on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He cautions them not to pronounce judgment before the time, that is, before the Lord comes, when he will expose all the secrets of the heart and each one will receive commendation (or condemnation) from God (4:5).<sup>318</sup>

Whilst the consequences of the curse (παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός) are readily explicable, the salvific manner in which it functions

<sup>314</sup> Barrett, *Corinthians*, 126-127. Fee remains unconvinced by Barrett's efforts, and rejects his conclusion on the basis that they “do not seem to reflect Pauline theology as we meet it elsewhere” (Fee, *Corinthians*, 210). However, such a response is too nebulous to seriously affect Barrett's argument.

<sup>315</sup> Cf. erotic magic in which physical suffering causes the victim to be disinterested in anybody other than the author of the spell.

<sup>316</sup> Ancient textual variations exist concerning this phrase.

<sup>317</sup> As above, a minor textual variation exists here.

<sup>318</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 177.



is perplexing (given the malevolent nature of cursing). Even though Christ is understood in terms of curse language in Pauline theology,<sup>319</sup> there is no mention of an individual curse causing salvation. Didache 16:5 contains an intriguing reference to the salvific nature of a curse:

Then human creation will pass into the testing fire [τὴν πύρωσιν τῆς δοκιμασίας], and many will be scandalized and perish [ἀπολοῦνται], but those who persevere in their belief will be saved by the curse itself [σωθήσονται ὑπ' αὐτοῦ τοῦ καταθέματος] (Didache 16:5).<sup>320</sup>

However, a critical difference exists between 1 Corinthians 5 and the *Didache*; in 1 Corinthians 5, the curse does not directly *effect* salvation. Rather, through Satanic agency, the curse is the vehicle by which physical suffering and death is produced—death being the “last enemy”.<sup>321</sup> It is death which prevents the errant Corinthian from sinning further, and it is death that transports him to the time of the eschaton at which point “the dead in Christ will rise first”.<sup>322</sup> As such, neither the curse, nor the man’s death is directly salvific.

### 3.5 Conclusion

In retrospect, we have argued that Paul envisions the cursing *and* the exclusion of the errant Corinthian in 1 Corinthians 5. Specifically, we demonstrated that whilst the meaning of γυνὴ πατρὸς in chapter 5 is inconclusive (cf. part 3.2), the biblical context

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<sup>319</sup> Cf. Galatians 3:13.

<sup>320</sup> K. Niederwimmer, *The Didache* (trans. L. M. Maloney; ed. H. W. Attridge; Hermeneia Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 221. For further discussion, cf. A. Milavec, “The Saving Efficacy of the Burning Process in *Didache* 16.5”, C. N. Jefford (ed.), *The Didache in Context: Essays on Its Text, History, and Transmission* (Supplements to Novum Testamentum; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 131-155; N. Pardee, “The Curse that Saves (*Didache* 16.5)”, *Didache in Context*, 156-176.

<sup>321</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:26. In a sense, then, Paul not only calls upon the man to be handed over to Satan, but also to another enemy—death. Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:54-55. In this context, it is useful to note Paul’s connection between sin and death (1 Corinthians 15:56).

<sup>322</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:16. Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:52: “For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”

of this rare phrasing suggests that Paul's thought should be understood in the context of *cursing, physical destruction, and exclusion*—from the outset of his discussion in verse 1 (cf. parts 3.2.1-3.2.2).

In Deuteronomy, γυνή πατρός (LXX) features within the context of נָא exclusion curses, which command “destruction” as a consequence of πορνεία with one's γυνή πατρός (cf. part 3.2.1). Furthermore, in Leviticus, γυνή πατρός is located in the context of the grave Levitical punishment of נָא—rendered “destruction” (LXX: ἐξολεθρεύω)—which denotes death in this context. Thus, Paul's thought concerning the appropriate punishment for πορνεία involving one's γυνή πατρός is clear from the outset: the man is to be cursed, excluded—destroyed.

Contrary to those advocates of an exclusion-only reading (cf. part 1.2), we have argued that Paul's command παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ is not a metaphorical call for exclusion, but instead constitutes an implicit curse (which is made explicit by Paul's words εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός, in verse 5). However, this assertion did not lead us to deny that Paul envisions exclusion in the wider context. On the contrary, we demonstrated that a theme of exclusion runs throughout part 5 (cf. part 3.3).

A curse motif (cf. part 3.4), the seeds of which we argued were in Paul's mind from the outset of his discussion, is indicated by παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός (in verse 5). We argued that there is a compelling resonance between 1 Timothy 1:20 (παρέδωκα τῷ Σατανᾷ [cf. part 3.4.2.1]) and 1 Corinthians 5:5 (παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ), where there are strong indications that a curse is envisaged. Furthermore, we demonstrated that even those who would seek to



interpret παρέδωκα τῷ Σατανᾷ in terms of exclusion are unsuccessful in precluding a curse interpretation: for παιδεύω could entail physical suffering in this context.

The story of Job’s “handing over” to the Satan (Job 1:12; 2:6 [cf. part 3.4.2.2]) presented us with another interesting resonance with 1 Corinthians 5:5, due to its fuller context (than 1 Timothy 1:20). However, whilst we resisted the conclusion that παραδίδωμί σοι denoted a formal curse in this context, the association between “handing over to Satan”—παραδίδωμί σοι—and physical destruction was inescapable.

On the basis of the Septuagintal rendering of דגל as ἀνάθεμα: “devote to God for destruction”, and a similar negative function of ἀνάθεμα within the context of ancient cursing, we argued that a comparable use existed in Galatians 1:8-9 and 1 Corinthians 12:3; 16:22 (cf. part 3.4.2.3). Thus, like παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ, in which the errant Corinthian is “handed over” to Satan, similarly ἀνάθεμα ἔστω denotes a “handing over”—or rather a “devotion” of another to be cursed.

In part 3.4.2.4, we argued that an inescapable resonance existed between Paul’s phrase παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ and the wider cross-cultural language of cursing in the ancient world. In particular, we showed that the particularity of Paul’s form of cursing is contextualised within his Judaeo-Christian tradition. For example, it is not into Tyche’s authority that the πορνὴ is placed, but into Satan’s.

Satan, we argued, functions as one who causes malevolent consequences in Pauline thought (cf. part 3.4.3). In this context, we demonstrated a relationship between Satan

and human suffering (including physical harm). Even when inflicting such harm, we noted that his malevolent deeds can unwittingly work for righteous—and even salvific—purposes. In relation to the errant Corinthian, we argued that Satan is to inflict physical suffering and death upon him, which Paul believes is justified due to the grievous nature of his crime, and the manner in which he is polluting the community.

Our interpretation of ὀλεθρον τῆς σαρκός began with the argument that the *crux interpretum* of verse 5 is one's understanding of παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ, for how one interprets this phrase directly impacts upon one's rendering of ὀλεθρον τῆς σαρκός (and, furthermore, ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῇ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου). This conclusion was supported by the argument that σὰρξ is a malleable term that could be nuanced in a physical manner, or it could be understood in other senses, such as “sinful flesh” (cf. part 3.4.4). We argued for the former, more physical understanding, by considering a number of intertexts.

Firstly, we explored 1 Corinthians 3 (in part 3.4.4.1) and argued that whilst salvation is assured in this passage (as in 1 Corinthians 5), physical suffering as a result of the destruction of the “work” cannot be ruled out. This understanding also had the merit of explaining Paul's enigmatic phrase οὕτως δὲ ὡς διὰ πυρός. Paul's temple language, again in 1 Corinthians 3, indicated a motif which relates sin, physical suffering, and death. As we noted, Paul boldly states that whoever defiles God's “temple” will be destroyed (φθείρω). In the context of 1 Corinthians 6, we noted that the defiling of the temple is spoken of in the context of πορνεία. This led us to conclusion that, likewise, the Corinthian offender is to be destroyed (ὀλεθρος: verse 5) for defilement. In



general, this underscored our argument that a connection exists in Pauline thought between human sin and physical destruction.

Through a consideration of the Corinthians' abuse of the Lord's Supper (in part 3.4.4.2), we again demonstrated this link. The Corinthians are disciplined in response to their sinful misconduct of the Lord's Supper, which leads to physical suffering, and even death in some cases. Moreover, the purpose of such discipline was seen to be salvific, in the sense that it prevented the errant Corinthians from being "condemned with the world" (verse 32). Finally, in our examination of the account of Ananias and Sapphira (cf. part 3.4.4.3), we established a similar, extra-Pauline, connection between sin, human suffering, and death.

Thus, in the light of parts 3.2-3.4., we concluded that Paul sought the cursing and exclusion of the errant Corinthian. In particular, the curse (denoted by παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός) envisaged Satan exercising his malevolent power to physically destroy the sexually immoral man. This understanding was anchored in a broader (extra-) Pauline conception of physical suffering (including death) as a consequence of sin. However, as this punishment is interpreted by Paul within the context of discipline (like 1 Timothy 1:20), whilst death follows the curse—salvation is secure (ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῇ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου)

Finally, in part 3.4.5, we explored the implications of this conclusion. Was cursing reconfigured by Paul to directly produce a benevolent end? Although an intriguing idea, it was ultimately unpersuasive. Instead, we argued that the curse Paul envisaged did not directly *effect* salvation. Rather, through Satanic agency, the curse is the vehicle by which physical suffering and death is produced—death being the "last enemy". It is

death which prevents the errant Corinthian from sinning further, and it is death that transports him to the time of the Eschaton at which point “the dead in Christ will rise first”. As such, neither the curse, nor the man’s death is salvific—although, despite suffering a curse, the man is truly saved.



## Conclusion

Again we stand before a world which has become foreign to us.<sup>1</sup>

In this thesis, we have argued that Paul's words παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός are most persuasively understood within the context of an ancient common language of cursing, in which individuals are "handed over" to a malevolent power to suffer harm. Specifically, in the case of the errant Corinthian, the man is to suffer death as a consequence of the curse.

Like most historical studies, this reading has a wider range of implications beyond those which are immediately apparent. In particular, it raises certain hermeneutical questions concerning the boundaries (if any) between historical study, and the use of the text within the contemporary church. Is an historical interpretation of the Bible an appropriate hermeneutic to employ in relation to the role of the text within the modern church?

One could assume the primacy of early church life and practice (and maintain that this is accurately reflected in the canon of the New Testament). In its most immoderate form, it is maintained that there is no disjuncture between the biblical text's ancient and contemporary meaning.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, in light of this thesis, if one is committed to this hermeneutical approach, one must allow for the possibility of cursing and excluding an "errant" member today. Of course, some contemporary groups do just that.<sup>3</sup> Leaving

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<sup>1</sup> W. Bousset, ("Der erste Brief an die Korinther", *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments neu überstezt und für die Gegenwart erklärt*, 2, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1917], 133) as quoted by Havener, "Curse", 344 n. 33.

<sup>2</sup> The singular of "meaning" is used deliberately here.

<sup>3</sup> The following account, from amongst the Mennonite Brethren, is illustrative:

aside the ethical questions surrounding this kind of action, it is clear that those who adopt this approach are consistent with the hermeneutical principle they espouse.

Whilst the scholars we considered in part 1.2. are far more sophisticated in their interpretative approach (i.e. they seek to translate Paul's culture into our contemporary context), the same underlying commitment to the applicability of the *historical* meaning of the text in our contemporary world is in evidence (no part is so grievous as to be merely rejected).

It could be argued that the problem for such interpreters is that their modern Western sensibilities mask their inconsistency. For example, we systematically argued that such scholars unconsciously reject a curse interpretation, for, we suggested, they could not conceive of a *contemporary* situation in which a church member is disciplined by means of a curse. In effect, their interpretative approach to the text unwittingly comes into conflict with their modern Western sensibilities. The problem with this situation is that, by necessity of their particular hermeneutical commitment, a concern with contemporary application can end up driving an historical interpretation of the text (we will not comment upon the other concern, namely to avoid presenting Paul in a strange, foreign, or overly harsh manner).

This makes for bad history, and bad theology. As an historical approach, it is frequently

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Pastor Brad concluded that a two-step process was necessary: 1. Excommunication. 2. A specific act of binding and loosing. In the second step, the church gathers in the name and power of the Lord Jesus, removes protection of the Holy Spirit and the angels of God from that person, and hands that person over to Satan so that he or she may experience more fully the consequences of the master he or she has chosen to serve (1 Corinthians 5; Matthew 18; 1 Timothy 1:20) The implementation of this second step was new to Allison's parents and many church members, so Pastor Brad took time to teach and field questions on this Scriptural principle. The church elders then proposed a resolution that this two-step process be applied to Allison. The resolution was ratified by a majority of members at a meeting on June 13, 1989 (Mennonite Brethren Herald, March 17<sup>th</sup> 2000, <http://old.mbherald.com/39-06/restoration.html>).



anachronistic, as it recasts Paul as a citizen of the twenty-first century. With regard to biblical interpretation, it stifles theological creativity (for the meaning is already determined, it requires only to be exhumed—if painstakingly). Instead, a different hermeneutic is required if one is to do justice to history, and to the contemporary church.

A reassertion of the disjuncture between the historical meaning of the text, and our contemporary appropriation of it is required. Firstly, this would result in an historical reading of the text being unshackled from contemporary concerns. Furthermore, one would then be enabled to seek creative ways of forming contemporary theology. For some, this approach is too destabilising to be realistically considered. If historical interpretation does not constrain the text, then what does (it should be noted that when a text is interpreted within a community, some consensus will generally exist)? These are questions far beyond the scope of these concluding remarks. It is, perhaps, worth considering in conclusion that in affirming the interpretative approach we have briefly outlined, the biblical text is gifted from the historian back to the individual—for an encounter that requires no long period of study, but a mere willingness to “engage” with the text.

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